A GUIDE TO THE True Religion: OR A DISCOURSE Directing to make a wise CHOICE of that Religion Men venture their Salvation upon: Seasonable for these Times, wherein there are such Diversities of Opinions and wayes of Religion. To inform the Ignorant, to resolve the Wavering, and to confirm the Weak.

By I. C. M. A. of T. C. C.

Josh. 24. 15. *And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord; Chuse you this day whom you will serve, whether the Gods ——— But as for me, and my House, we will serve the Lord.*

EDINBURGH,
Printed by *Andrew Anderson*, and are to be sold at his House, on the North side of the Cross; Anno 1699.

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Premonition to the Reader, shewing the occasion and intendment of the *Discourse*.

Courteous Reader,

There is no good Christian, but is ready upon all just occasions to express his sad resentment of the wofull Divisions and dangerous Errors, wherewith the Churches of Christ in these Kingdoms have been for many years past, and still are so distracted: for notwithstanding that our civill Wars are through the mercy of God ended, yet our Religious jars and rents are not healed. Indeed, how can any pious Soul consider the great dishonour done thereby to the Holy Name of God, the reproach to the Christian Religion, the great scandal to those sometimes famous Churches (which are now, hereby become infamous through the World) yea, the apparent ruine threatned by these things, and not break into sad lamentation for the same? Surely this is a Lamentation, and shall be for a Lamentation. And although the serious consideration of these evils, in order to the repairing and healing of them, and the preventing the publick ruine threatned to the Church and State thereby, belongeth to the wisedome and zeal of those that be in places of eminency, and are vested with power and authority requisite thereunto; yet Private Christians in a lower station and capacity, cannot but have their eyes upon the sad influence those things have upon their dearest Friends and

Neighbours with whom they converse, and in their behalf meditate upon some remedy for the same. Certain it is, that the malignant influence these things have on the common sort is very sad; whilst gazing on those sad contesting matters of Religion, Some continue meer Sceptick*s, ever wavering, and not knowing what way of Religion to chuse, and so neglect to be of any; Some are professed Atheists, or profane Wretches; Others be seduced into dangerous Errors as* Popery, Socinianism, Quakerism, *&c. Many ingage in contentions they know not why, nor for what: And the greatest part of Christians wofully stumbled in their Profession.*

The intendment of these Papers, is to propose some help against those evils, and to guide and direct those that are apt to miscarry through occasion of the diversities of Opinions and Ways found amongst us. Wherein they are first excited to make a wise Choice of that Religion they venture their Eternal Salvation upon, and are informed how to do it. Indeavours are used to fix and establish them in the truth of the Christian Religion, and to acquaint them with the great and Fundamental Doctrines and Duties thereof necessary unto Salvation, Which have been owned by all Christians and Churches in all places and ages; and to perswade to believe and obey them, as that wherenpon their eternal safety depends. Then our discourse descends to points of a secondary and inferior Nature that are controverted

amongst

amongst wise and godly Christians, and directions are laid down how to find out the right and safe way for Faith and practice in such things (especially when we are necessitated to hold forth a profession of our selves therein) Wherewith is shewed also what tenderness and respect, is to be used toward those that differ from us in those things, Whilst, in the mean time, We carry it at a greater distance with those that err fundamentally, and subvert the Christian Faith, and Religion. All which counsels being evidenced to be good and wholsome, will manifestly declare, Those to be the most approved and judicious Christians, who (under all those great changes and revolutions which have been amongst us of latter times) have especially exercised their zeal for the maintaining of the Fundamentall Doctrines of the Gospel, and the practice and power of Godliness; as also for the preserving the peace of the Church, and love and union amongst Christians: Whilst in the mean time they have shewed greatest moderation and condescension, towards those that differ in controverted Points of a lower Nature, even to a degree of compliance also with the stream of the times in some things, which seem in themselves less desireable and inconvenient (provided in their Consciences they judge them not to be sinful) if conducing to the furtherance of the Gospel, the peace of the Churches and Salvation of Souls.

Indeed this will be judged by some rash and

censorious Spirits to be Hypocrisie, Time-serving, or self-seeking, and such persons may be branded for Temporizers, Turn-coats or Apostates, or what not; but when things shall be considered in calmness and Sobriety, Such will be found the greatest friends of Christ and the Christian Religion: and such actions most consonant to Scripture commands, and to the examples of the Saints recorded therein; whereas such as are found departing from any Fundamental and generally confessed points of faith or Practice, These imputations may be more warrantably charged upon them.

Reader, Let these sad and woefull differences, errours, and debates, provoke thee to examine the grounds thy profession is built upon; to study more the verity and excellency of the Christian Religion, and be better established therein; to understand, believe, love, and obey the great and necessary Principles thereof; humbly to seek of God the discovery of his mind in things more dark and controverted; and to exercise more Christian love and charity those that are not of the same perswasion or practice with thee therein: And then, thou wilt be secured from the danger of those evils; yea, they will prove advantagious to thy greatest good, although intended by Satan for thy hurt. To help thee herein, is the intendment and addesigne of this discourse, in order whereunto, the blessing of the Lord is humbly implored to go along with the same.

THE CONTENTS. OF The ſeverall CHAPTERS.

CHAP. I.

RElegion the grand concernment of Men in this World. Great differences about it. Neceſſity of a wiſe and deliberate choſing ones Religion. A propoſition laid down, which is the Subject matter of the following Diſcourſe. Page 1.

CHAP. 2. *Shewing, wherein this wiſe Choſing ones Religion ſtands, and what Acts concern thereunto.* Page 5.

CHAP. 3. *Conſiderations evidencing it a principal Point of wiſdome for a Man to make a right Choice of that Religion he profeſſes in the World, and ventures his Eternal Salvation upon.* Page 13

CHAP. 4. *Wherein the Practice of this Duty is inſiſted upon, and Directions given, how to chuſe the true Religion amongſt ſo many as are in the World. All other Religions being rejected, The Chriſtian Religion is evidenced to be the only true Religion.* Page 21.

CHAP. 5. *Further directions how to chuſe the right and ſafe way amongſt ſuch diverſities of Sects and Opinions as be amongſt Chriſtians. A Diſcovery of the Fundamental Doctrines,*

of Faith and practical duties of Godliness, generally embraced by all Christians in all times and places, with advice in reference unto them. Page 30

CHAP. 6. *Other directions in Points of a Secundary Nature, that are not so clearly laid down in Scripture, nor unanimously received by all Christians, but are Problemaical; and yet there is a necessity to be of the one or other Perswasion, how to make a right choise in such a Case. 4 Rules about this.* Page 41

CHAP. 7. *A closer application of the foregoing discourse to the present State of the Church in England, with particular advice in reference to the different Ways and Professions found amongst us.* Pag. 50.

CHAP. 8. *Wherein the great controversie of Communion with, or Separation from the Church of England, is discussed. A view of what is therein Praise-worthy; and of what is disallowable in the Judgement of those that scruple Communion with her. Directions suited thereunto.* Page. 81

CHAP. 9. *Wherein are laid down some general Rules of Caution to preserve Christians from rash and unjust Separation. The Conclusion of the Discourse.* Page 89.

CHAP.

CHAP. I.

Religion the grand concernment of Men in this World, great differences about the necessity of a wise and deliberate Chusing ones Religion. The counsel of Joshua *to the* Israelites *applyed to us. A proposition laid down, which is the Subject matter of the following Discourse.*

THE business of Religion is the grand concernment that all of us are sent into the World to mind, and therefore God hath, in the very framing of mans nature, laid so deep an impression thereof in us, that there's no Nation so barbarous and inhumane, but doth place this amongst the greatest matters, that they judge themselves to be interressed in; insomuch as some observe, Religion is more proper to man then reason. All men, and only men have a smatch of Religion; whereas some shew of reason is found in many Beasts. *Lactant. de ira Dei, Solus homo sapientia instructus est, ut Religionem solus intelligat, & hoc est hominis atque bruti omnino vel præcipua vel sola distantia.*

But as it is a thing all do profess themselves interessed in; so there's nothing in

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all the world, men are at greater differences about; some taking up one Religion, and some another, as pleases themselves best; yea each Nation almost have chosen a peculiar Deity, as we find in Scripture, one serving *Baal*, another *Dagon* others *Moloch* or *Ashtaroth*, &c. Some worshipping the *Sun*, others the *Moon* or *Starrs*, and almost every Creature whence they received any benefite: and some have not been wanting that have adored the Devil himself. How greatly then doth it behove every one to make a wise choise of that God he intends to serve, and of that Religion he means to profess in the World and to live and die in? That he may first chuse the true Religion and true God, and then cleave to him with full purpose of heart, as *Barnabas* exhorts, *Acts* 11. 23. And the rather because of the great importance thereof; Mans eternall happinesse or misery depends on the right knowing and acknowledging God, and serving him; or his mistake about it: according to the witnesse of Christ himself *John* 17. 3. *This is life eternall to know* (so as to acknowledge unto godliness) *Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.*

We read in the story of the *Israelites* the vanity of Mans nature in matters of Reli-

gion; though no Nation under the whole Heavens had greater discoveries of the true God then they had; both by his Word and Oracles, instructing them from Heaven, and giving them his Law on Mount *Sinai*, and teaching them by his Prophets, the infallible interpreters of that Law: as also by his mighty works, bringing them out of *Egypt* by his outstretched Arm, working signes and wonders, dividing the Red-Sea, giving them water out of the Rock and bread and Flesh from Heaven in a Wilderntsse, and guiding them by a Cloud of smoake, and a Pillar of Fire: yet how apt were they to turn away from God, and to worship other Gods, even of the *Egyptians* and *Canaanites*, whom God cast out before them? A pregnant instance whereof we have in the businesses of the Golden Calf, though but forty dayes before, they heard the Law proclaimed in the greatest solemnity that ever was, even by the Ministry of Angels with Thunder, Lightning and Earthquake, which wrought such ph ablentss in their Spirit, that they professed, whatever the Lord should speak to them, That that they would doe *Deut.* 5.27. Yet when *Moses* was but a while withdrawn from them upon the Mount, they quickly turned

aside

and made them a Calf to worship, after the manner of *Egypt*. This being observed by *Joshua* his Successour, he became jealous over them with a godly jealousie; and being fearfull that when he was gone from them, they should do the like, He indeavours to establish them in the true Religion, and to bind them to the Lord in the strongest bonds, *Josh.* 24. He bids them, verse 15. *Chuse deliberatly what God they would serve*, directing them by his own example; and then when they had deliberately chosen Jehovah for their God, he binds them unto him by a solemn covenant, *verse* 25. And sets up a lasting remembrance of it.

These things are written for our instruction, and do shew what a Spirit there is in us, even an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God, as well as in them formerly (as the Apostle shews, *Heb.* 3. 12.) Though we have as full discoveries of God as they had, and greater means of knowledge by Gospel-light, to know God and Jesus Christ: Yet our hearts are equally fickle and ready to forsake God, and the true Religion, and (as the Apostle taxeth the *Galathians*) to turn to another Gospel and another Christ then we have received, yea to another God, the

World

World, our Lusts, or Satan, to serve them more then the true God. Therefore this counsel of *Joshua* may be as seasonable to us now as to them formerly, *viz.* To chuse deliberately and seriously what God we will serve; and then to resolve to cleave unto him for ever: or wisely to chuse that Religion, we will professe in the World and venture our salvation upon; and then to labour to be established and fixed therein, so as by no storms of temptation we be removed.

The urging of this Counsel upon unsettled and wavering Souls, being the intendment and design of this discourse, suited to these fluctuating and shaking times, It may be contracted into this insuing proposition, which shall be more fully dilated on in the following Chapters, *viz.*

That it is a great point of wisedom for a Man to make a right Choice of that Religion he means to take up and professe in the World, that he intends to live and die in, & to venture his eternal Salvation upon.

CHAP. II.

Shewing wherein this wise Chusing our Religion stands, & what acts concur thereunto.

HAving laid down the proposition which is the ground of our *Discourse*

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in the former chapter, we come now to inquire concerning the nature of that *choice* wherein it stands, and what things necessarly must concurre to make a wise choice of that Religion, we intend to profess in the World.

Election or chusing (in a generall sense) is an act of the will, proceeding from the previous knowledge and judgement of the understanding, whereby amongst diverse wayes or means propounded for the attainment of some *End*, it doth resolve upon some one above the rest, that it will ad here unto, and make use of for that purpose.

In particular, *Chusing* ones *Religion*, is also an act of the will arising from the previous knowledge and judgement of the understanding (discerning the nature of the thing) whereby amongst the many different Religions (or wayes of serving and pleasing God, and of attaining unto happinesse with him) that are found in the World, a man doth pitch and resolve upon one above all the rest (and with rejection of all others) with full purpose to adhere unto it, to live and die in it, and even venture a mans salvation and happiness on it.

Here are 3 Acts wherein this right chusing ones Religion doth stand, to be explained in order.

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is an act of the *understanding*, judging and discerning the nature of the thing that the will chuseth; and its excellencie above al things that come in competition with it; for to a right choice of the will the understanding and judgement must proceed it: must know the nature of it, and discern it; good, or else its but a blind choice, not becoming a reasonable creature, and a man may else imbrace evil as well as good. The will when is acts regularly follows the Dictate of the understanding; this tells what is good, and then what chuses, as the Palat judgeth of what it tasts, and then the stomach or appetite craves it; so must the understanding go before her, & discern the nature, verity and goodnesse of that Religion, as also the falsnesse, vanity and dangerousnesse of other Religions before the will can make a right choice of it. Man being a religious creature, by the common instinct of his naturall conscience, is moved strongly to worship and serve a Deity (as we see in all Nations of the Earth) much more when he is further stirred up by a divine instinct. Now we should consider as men (as the prophets phrase is) and not exert actions of highest importance without understanding and reason, worshiping we know not what (as Christ taxes the *Samaritans*

ritans, John 4.) but give God a reasonable service, knowing what God we serve, and what Religion we take up; and not taking up the next at hand, at adventure, (as most men do) that Religion professed where they live, & commended to them by Education, example, *&c.* but understanding what we do therein. And therefore men that act according to reason, will look into the Religions in the World, and judge which is best among them; or rather into the Word and Oracles of God himself, for they best discover what God is, and how he will be worshipped. Therefore if there be any such thing, as Divine Oracles in the world, wherein God hath revealed his will concerning matters of Faith and worship, we should have special recourse unto them. Now that the holy Scriptures (commonly called the Bible) are such, that is, *the Oracles of the God of Heaven*, wherein he directs us in the knowledge and worship of himself, and in the way of Religion; This may appear even to those that have not yet taken upon them any profession of Religion by such Infallible demonstrations, as reason cannot contradict *viz.* From these characters imprinted on them which shew them to be of God from the miracles wrought to confirm

them

them, from that ſpirit of holineſſe ſeen in ſuch as ſeriouſly believe them, from the accompliſhment of a great part of thoſe things revealed therein, even ſuch things as were utterly inviſible and improbable to created underſtandings, *&c.* And therefore there ſhould be an exact conſideration in the judgement and underſtanding of a man of that Religion revealed in the Scriptures. He ſhould 1. Take a particular view of the principal Doctrines, the great myſteries of faith and duties of godlineſs taught therein, not taking all in the lump together, but having a diſtinct knowledge of them. He whoſe Religion is in the groſs only, and hath no diſtinct apprehenſions of the particular doctrines of faith and duties of godlineſſe, which that Religion teaches, he hath no Religion at all; for how can theſe Doctrines influence his heart and life to make him fear, and love God truly, and lead him to the power and practice of godlineſſe, if not diſtinctly known and diſcerned by him? Then 2. Hee muſt diſcern the *verity* and *certainty* of theſe Doctrines, that he may venture his ſoul upon them, knowing him in whom he hath believed; for which end it's exceeding neceſſary to be converſant in thoſe Treatiſes which prove the

verity of the Christian Religion, and of the Scriptures (wherein it is set down) of which many be extant in our own Language. Without this a man shal never hold fast his Religion, especially in trying times. 3. He should know the *excellency* thereof, that its such a Religion as tends most to the magnifying of God, and giving glory unto him, to the advancement of man to true happiness in the love and favor of his God, and neareſt communion with him, and fulleſt conformity unto him. He should often look upon the sublimity of the mysteries, the purity of the precepts, excellency of the rewards, and dreadfulness of the punishments. And thus the understanding preceeding in discerning and judging the Religion which is to be chosen, is one Act in this *Election*.

2. Act, After the understanding doth thus present the true Religion before us in the certainty, glory and excellency of it; Then the next Act is for the *Will* to elect, chuse, and imbrace it, solemnly to espouse this Religion, and say, It shal be mine; It's that I am resolved to professe, and to venture my eternal salvation upon, what ever inconveniences I may meet with in the profession thereof; what ever disgrace reproaches, losses, Persecutions, &c

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yet this Religion I will be of, and this God I will serve. We must sit down and consider what it will cost us to be Christians, and then espouse the Christian Religion; and take it for better, for worse, embrace the crosse it threatens, as well as the Crown it promises; For so our Lord warned his Disciples, telling them, *He that will come after me, and will be my Disciple, must deny himself*, (in his deareſt lusts & sins, nay, in his estate and life sometime) *and take up his Cross* (of afflictions and persecution) *and follow him*, (in a way of holinesse & purity in the straight way.) And then he will give him *a Crown of life*, he shal have an hundred fold in this life, with persecution (that is, the comfort of an hundred fold, if he misse of such increase in the same kinde) and eternall glory in the World to come. Now we must sit down & consider what we do, as (*Luke* 14.28.31) Christ teaches by the parable of him that builds a Tower, and of the King that goes to warfare. Now thus to chuse our Religion, to espouse the Christian Faith for better, for worse, to take the sweet with the bitter, the Cross with the Crown: This is another Act, wherein this choice stands.

3. Act is a setled purpose, and full resolution to live and dye therein, to adhere

and cleave thereto, even to the end, to be faithful to the Death; to cleave to the Lord with full purpose of heart; as we read *Joshua* his resolution, I and my house will serve the Lord; we are resolved (who ever depart from *Jehovah*) we will cleave unto him. And as the Disciples, *John* 6. when many forsook Christ and the Christian Religion; their Lord saith unto them, and *will ye also go away? Peter* answers in the name of the rest, *whether shal we go, for thou hast the words of Eternal life.* Alack, if we draw back from the Lord, his soul shall have no pleasure in us, we draw back unto perdition; but if we continue in the faith, we shal then have the Crown of life. Life and Death are before us herein, as *Moses* told the *Israelites*, if we serve the Lord and fear him and cleave unto him, then life; but if we turn from him, and his truth and wayes, then Death; all a mans righteousnesse shal be forgotten, he shal dye in his sins.

Thus in these three Acts stands the right chusing of a mans religion.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

Conſiderations evidencing it a principal point of wiſdom for a man to make a right choice of that Religion he profeſſes in the World, and ventures his Eternal Salvation upon.

HAving ſhewed, wherein this wiſe chuſing ones Religion ſtands, and what Acts muſt concur thereto, We come next to demonſtrate it to be ſuch a principal point of wiſedom for a man to make a right choice of his *Religion* he profeſſes in the world, and ventures his Salvation upon. This may be evinced from the enſuing Conſiderations.

1. The *Neceſſity* for a man to be of ſome *Religion*; and if ſo, wiſedom ſhould direct to make choyce of the beſt. Now it's neceſſary to be of ſome *Religion*; We cannot live without God (*Acts* 17. 28. *In him we live, move, and have our being*.) And is it not fit then we ſhould acknowledge God and worſhip him? in the very framing of the nature of man, there are ſuch principles of *Religion* ingraven in him, that cannot be razed out, that have taught the very Heathens to worſhip a Deity; ſo that we ſhould be worſe then Heathens, yea, become very beaſts, and below men, if wee ſhould not be of ſome *Religion*: Beſides

it is the expreſſe command of God, by his written Laws given to the Sonnes of Men, that they adore, worſhip and ſerve him; he expects it as an homage from them, and will not looſe his glory; Such Atheiſts are accurſed by him, as caſt off all Religion, & live without God in the World: And though ſome ſuch Atheiſts have been found who in their proſperity forget God, whilſt they can better ſhift without him; yet in their miſeries and dangers, they have been forced to acknowledge God, and call upon him, as the Mariners in the Ship with *Jonah*, *&c.* Now if it be ſo, Is it not fit to chuſe the true God, and the true Religion?

2. There are many falſe Religions in the World, and we may ſoon be impoſed on and deluded, if we make not a wiſe choice of our Religion; There be many Lords and many gods ſo called, (ſaith the Apoſtle, 1 *Cor.* 8. 5.) though to us, there is but one living and true God; ther's many wayes of Religion, Heatheniſm, Mahometaniſm, Judaiſm, and Chriſtianity; and amongſt Chriſtians, how many different wayes this day? ſcarce to be numbred, and therefore we had need to make a good choice. The greateſt part of the World were deceived in former times

times of old, the whole World almoſt followed falſe gods, except *Iſrael*. At this day, ſome obſerve, if the World be divided into thirty parts, nineteen of them are Heathen Idolaters, ſix be *Mahometans*; ſome (though inconſiderable) *Jews*; and only the other five parts of the thirty be Chriſtians: and how many different wayes be amongſt them? Proteſtants, Papiſts, *Muſcovites*, *Greeks* in *Europe*, (beſides multitudes in other parts of the World,) And theſe admitting many ſubdiviſions amongſt themſelves; Therefore we had need to make a wiſe choice.

3. It's that whereupon our greateſt intereſt depends; on the right chuſing ones Religion, or our miſtakes about it, eternall happineſs or miſery, life or death depend. *Deut.* 32. 46, 47. in things of great importance men uſe much deliberation, and make the wiſeſt choice they can, how neceſſary is it here? That opinion or dream that every man may be ſaved by his own Religion, if he be true to it, is more becoming *Turks* then *Chriſtians*. They ſay there are three Banners whereby men are conducted to Heaven, *Moſes's*, *Chriſts*, and *Mahomets*; but we Chriſtians know no other way to Salvation but one, *viz.* by faith in Jeſus Chriſt; *for there's no other*

name

name under Heaven to be saved by, but by the name of Jesus Christ, Acts 4. 12. Indeed many lesser differences may be amongst them that hold that one Faith: They may hold the head Christ, and yet differ in smal things with safety to their Souls; if they build on the foundation and corner-stone Jesus Christ, (heartily believing the principles of the Christian Faith, and living according to them, though they add thereto the Hay, Stubble, and wood of smaller errors, they may be saved notwithstanding these. 1 *Cor.* 3. 15. Salvation may be had amongst several sorts of Christians, that all agree in the great Articles of the Christian Faith, and live piously and charitably, whether *Lutherans, Calvinists, Arminians, Anabaptists, Episcopal, Presbyterian, Independent, &c.* These are not different Religions, but different forms of the same Religion, wherein the children of the same Father, are dressed up in different habits. But where any differ in fundamentals, and even turn to another Religion, to another Gospel, or Christ (as the Apostle speaks to the *Galatians,*) as too many Sects amongst us, are found to do, *viz. Papists, Socinians, Quakers, &c.* Those I mean who are throughly such, not all that ignorantly adhere to them

them,) it would be fooliſh charity to flatter them with hopes of Salvation, in ſuch wayes, (if living and dying according to thoſe corrupt principles,) becauſe they are in the number of thoſe *Damnable* Hereſies the Scripture ſpeaks of. Now this being clear, that Salvation dependeth upon eſpouſing the right *Religion*; What wiſedom is it to make a good choice?

4. Becauſe elſe if one ſhould *happen* on the true Religion, he would never be *True* unto it, unleſs he take it up on ſuch a right choice, as before was ſpoken of; we cannot be *Serious Chriſtians*, nor *ſtrongh* Chriſtians, but by halves only; nor *Conſtant*, holding out to the End, without this right choice.

(1.) *Not ſerious Chriſtians.* Such as take up a Religion they know not what, and on grounds they know not why, will be but ſleighty and formal in it; a little of outſide profeſſion they may have, but the power of it will be wanting. Thus the common ſort of Chriſtians, that take not up Religion on a wiſe choice, underſtanding what it is, and diſcerning the verity and excellency of it, but becauſe it is profeſſed in the countrey where they live, injoyned by the Laws of the Land, and commended

ded by the example of Others, whom they esteem wise and holy, alack, how formal and sleighty are they therein; not considering the glory of the great God that made them and redeemed them, is concerned therein, and that the Salvation of their own souls depends on it: Whereas such as make a wise choice out of knowledge and discerning, serve God with all their heart and strength and soul, they rest not in the former, but labour in the power of godlinesse. Religion is their main business in the World.

(2.) Nor *thorough* Christians, but only by the halves, (as *Agrippa, almost perswaded to be Christians.*) They will follow Christ a little way, and perform some of the out-side and easie parts of Religion: but when they hear some hard sayings, (as the *Capernaits*) or some difficult duties pressed on them that cross flesh and blood and worldly interest, they will except them, and say, *in this thing the Lord be merciful to me*, &c. These are like the *Scribe, not farre from the Kingdome of Heaven, but never shall come there*; like *Herod*, that reform many things, but not at all, will pick and chuse where they please. Oh that this were not the case of many called Christians! And this because they understand

not

not aright what the Christian Religion is, and take it not upon good grounds, therefore they fall short: whereas he that understands what an holy Religion it is, and what great duties it requires, and casts up before hand the inconveniences, losses and sufferings he may meet with, comparing them with the recompence of reward, the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, he will go through-stitch, will follow God fully, and will be altogether a Christian.

3. Not *Constant*, but turning away from it upon every Temptation. Such are ever wavering and halting betwixt two, as the *Israelites* of old betwixt *Iehovah* and *Baal*. If heresie, seducement, and the power of deluſions come amongſt ſuch, how do they turn away from that Religion they have imbraced by companies, and turn Runnagados, or if the heat of perſecution ſcorch them, *they wither away becauſe they have no Root. Mat*, 13. We have had too ſad experience of this amongſt the giddy unſtable ſort of Chriſtians in our times, when God had let looſe errors and hereſies amongſt us, (to try who were ſound and ſincere, and who not) how many were carried away as with a flood? And if *Popery* ſhould prevail again, or *Mahometaniſm*, through the

the conquering Sword of the *Turks*, one may tremble to think whither ſuch ungrounded Chriſtians may be carryed: *Whereas* on the other hand the Chriſtian that takes up his Religion on good grounds through a wiſe choice, knowing what, and in whom he hath believed, wil through grace ſtand ſtrongly *as the Houſe built upon the Rock, Mat. 7.* When the Winds blew and the Waves beat, he ſtands; *The gates of Hell ſhall not prevail againſt ſuch.* Therefore we ſee what a great point of wiſdom it is, for a man to make a wiſe choice of that Religion he takes up; elſe he will not be true unto it; he will not be a ſerious Chriſtian, nor a thorough, nor a conſtant Chriſtian, and then as good be none at all. It will nothing avail them unto Salvation to imbrace the true Religion, no more then it did profite the *Iſraelites* of old, to have the Temple of the Lord amongſt them; or the *Philiſtims* to have the Ark of the Covenant with them, it will but increaſe their condemnation.

Theſe conſiderations are ſufficient (without inſiſting upon any other) to evidence the truth of our propoſition, and to commend to us this great duty viz. *The wiſe chuſing of that Religion we profeſſe in the World, that we*

mean

mean to live and dye in, and to venture our Eternal Salvation upon.

CHAP. IIII.

Wherein the Practice of this Duty is insisted on, and Directions given how to chuse the true Religion amongst so many as are in the World. All other Religions being rejected, The Christian Religion is evidenced to be the only true Religion.

WE are now come to the practicall part of our discourse to shew how this may be reduced into action, that we have been treating on, but in *words hitherto*; let every one that God hath given the understanding of a man unto, be induced to make a wise choice of that Religion he ventures his eternal Salvation upon.

This discourse is intended only for such as be resolved to be of some Religion, and will not live as *Atheists*. As for them that will not be of any Religion at all, but live without God in the World, only live to eat and drink, and work and sleep, and mind their sensual pleasures, they degenerate from the Nature of Men, and are even turned unto Beasts; fooliſh are they and ignorant (to use the *Psalmists* words, *Psal.* 73.) and even in this point as Beasts, as far below men as *Nebuchadnezzar* was when

when he did *eat grasse as the Oxen, and couched amongst the Beasts*; for such violate the very Law of Nature, which hath taught all Nations, however rude and barbarous, to take up some profession of Religion. They transgresse also the written Law of God, which he hath given in his Word, and will judge men by, at the last day, which requires solemn worship and service from the Sons of men. They bring themselves directly under the curse or imprecation, Jer. 10. 25. *Powr out thy fury upon the Heathen, and upon the Families that call not on thy Name. The wicked shall be turned into Hell, with all the Nations that forget God*, Psalm 9.17. As they say to God now, depart from us, we will not know thy wayes: so they shall hear God say to them shortly, *Depart from me ye cursed*, &c. Nor do I speak to such base and low Spirits, as take up their Religion on trust from others, and pinne their Faith upon the sleeves of those, to whom they have subjected their judgements and consciences, upon account of any worldly, or corrupt interest: But to such noble Spirits, as with the *Bereans* will take pains to search *the Scriptures*, and use all Gods appointed means to inform themselves; that they may venture their souls on a sure bottom.

Consi-

Consider as men, and make a wise choice of that Religion you venture your Salvation upon. Its not sufficient that it be delivered to you by Tradition from your Ancestors; that you have learned it by education from Godly Parents; that it is commanded by the Laws of the Land wherein you live, and commended by the practice of wise and pious persons, whom you reverence: but make a wise choice for your selves; Labour to understand distinctly the several Doctrines, and mysteries of Faith, and duties of Godliness contained therein: and to know the verity and excellency of it; and so take it up upon deliberation, weighing both the conveniences and inconveniences so it, Comparing the sufferings, losses, reproaches, persecutions you meet withall: with the reward and Crown promised; and so make a wise choice of your Religion, resolving to live and dye therein, to adhere to it to the end, and be faithful even to Death.

This is a duty necessary and seasonable to be pressed, some have not yet chosen their Religion. It's to be feared ther's too many, not only of the younger sort, but of the more antient, who (according to the proverb) have their Religion to chuse

chuſe. Some have made ſome kind of choice, but need to be confirmed and eſtabliſhed therein upon good grounds, and to be ſtirred up to be true to the true Religion they profeſſe, even to be ſerious, thorough and conſtant Chriſtians.

Make this choice then ſpeedily, for this is the buſineſſe you come into the World about, to know and acknowledge, to worſhip and glorifie God; and your Salvation depends upon it. Live not without God any longer, but acknowledge him that made and redeemed you, that feeds and preſerves you, and learn how to ſerve him acceptably. *Do it wiſely*, leſt you be deluded, there being ſuch *diverſities* of Religions, and ſo many falſe wayes in the World, you had need to have your eyes about you; erring herein will not ſtand with the ſafety of your ſouls, your external hapineſſe or miſery depends upon it. And then be *True* to that Religion you chuſe, play not faſt and looſe with it. It's a buſineſſe of higheſt concernment to be ſerious in Religion, what ever you triſle in, be not falſe herein, what ever you be faulty in. Let the Doctrines and myſteries of Faith you receive, influence your hearts and lives, ſanctify and change them; reſt not in the form of godlineſſe with-

without the power of it. Men may as well miscary in the true Religion as in a false, if they be false unto it.

Quest. But here a question must be resolved in order to the practice of this duty, which is this. *Some may say, Seing there are such diversities of Religion in the World, How shal we be able to make a right choice, amongst so many, of the true Religion, especially such of us as be weak and ignorant, when great and learned men differ so much about it amongst themselves.*

Answer. This is a question of very great importance, and indeed deserves a serious Answer, I shal speak to it in two particulars.

1. It is a mistake to think, because of the differences of opinions amongst men, that there is such a multitude of Religions in the World; for every different opinion is not a different Religion. There are (to speak properly) but four Religions in the World, although there be different Sects & parties amongst each of these, *viz. Heathenism, Mahometanism, Judaism and Christianity.* Indeed these four disagree much amongst themselves. *In Heathenism* some worship one God, some another, some multitudes joyntly, as may be seen in Scripture and in all Histories. In *Mahometa-*

nism,

tanism, all follow that Impostor *Mahomet*, but yet there are great differences amongst themselves, so that they are at deadly Feud often one with another for their Religion sake, as is storied of the *Turkish* and *Persian Mahometans*. In *Judaism* all worship the true God, the maker of Heaven and Earth, and receive the Law from *Moses*, serving God according to the *Ordinances thereof; yet have they different Sects* amongst themselves, as the *Pharisees*, *Sadducees*, *Essens*, *&c.* In Christianity all worship God in Christ, although there be diversities of Sects and Heresies amongst them; So that indeed there are but four Religions in the world.

2. There's a great difficulty to discern which of these four we should chuse for our Religion, even the weakest understanding that indifferently weighs them, may be convinced.

(1.) For *Heathenism*, Its evident to reason their Religion is not true, to worship so many Gods, and them also creatures, as the Sun and Moon, yea, mortal men that are dead, such as *Jupiter*, *Juno*, *Saturn*, *&c.* Yea, the worst of Men, Their own Poets have branded them with black notes of infamy for Adultery, Theft, Murther, &c. It was Gods just judgment (as the Apostle ob-

obserues, *Rom.* 1. *To give them up to such delusions to worship such gods, because when they knew the true God they did not glorifie him as God.* Many of their own Religion were convinced, they were not in the right, and therefore *Cicero* in his Book *De naturâ Deorum*, saith, *I would I could as well finde out the true Religion, as convince others to be false.*

(2.) For *Mahometanism*, though it hath spread far over the World, (yea, further then *Christianity* is spread at this day) yet its most easie to prove that to be a false Religion; Their Prophet was a deceiver and a very flagitious person, and wrought no miracles; their *Alcaron* is most barbarous and without sense; their Doctrine impure as wel as their Lives; their Religion promises a carnal Paradise in the world to come, full of sensual pleasures, not spiritual, and suitable to rational immortal souls. It was propagated in the World by the Sword, and maintained by ignorance, and suppressing all humane learning.

(3.) For *Judaism*, the third Religion in the World, That was indeed of God, confirmed in the Old Testament; But it was to continue for a time, till Christ came, *of whom Moses and the Prophets witnesse a-*

fundamentally; then at the time of Reformation it was to be abolished, *Heb* 9. 10. Their whole worship & Ceremonies had respect to him on whom, because they would not believe, but rejected and crucified him, *the Wrath of God is come upon them to the uttermost*. They and their Temple was destroyed and the worship of it abrogated and to this day so continues.

(4) It remains therefore that the Christian Religion is the true Religion, or else there's none in the World. And it indeed is witnessed to, both in *Mahomets* Alcoran, and in the *Jewish* Old Testament, which speaks fully of Jesus Christ, his birth and parentage, with the circumstances of time and place, his death, resurrection, &c. *This was confirmed by many signes and wonders, and real miracles wrought by the first planters of this Religion*: Heb. 2. 4. By the means and wayes of propagation of it, by weak and unlearned men, by whose preaching it soon overspread the World and took such rooting, that the power, craft, and malice of men and Devils cannot root it out. Its evidenced by the purity and spirituality of its Doctrine; By the sublimity of the Mysteries revealed in it, wherein the highest wisedom of God shines forth; By the greatnesse and excellen-

excellency of the rewards & punishments; By the holy Spirit appearing in the serious professors of it (such a Spirit of holinesse as is no where else to be found in the world) And by the design it hath to glorifie God and to humble Man, &c. By these and the like evidences the weakest, may easily be convinced, That the Christian Religion is the only true Religion of all others in the World, and so be directed to make choice thereof.

CHAP. V.

Further Directions how to chuse the right and safe Way amongst such diversities of Sects and opinions, as be amongst Christians. A discovery of the fundamental Doctrines of Faith and practical duties of Godliness, generally imbraced by all Christians in all times and places, with advice in reference unto them.

HAving inquired into the several Religions this day professed in the world and found upon good evidence the Christian Religion to be the only true Religion men may venture their Salvation upon. Wee meet next with no small difficulty whereby weak and ignorant persons are perplexed (occasioned by the

diversity of *Sects* and opinions which are found amongst Christians) *viz.*

Quest. *To know, (after they once be resolved to be Christians) how to chuse the right and safe way amongst such various Sects and different perswasions of those called Christians, (unless a man might be saved in any of these Sects and wayes) What directions are there for the safe conduct of such as are at a losse herein?*

Answer. Because this is a grand case wherein very many (in these sad times of Division) greatly need Direction, I shall guide them to a safe way, wherein they may securely walk, and venture their Souls without fear of miscarrying. And it is this: Let them labour to understand clearly and so imbrace heartily those *Fundamental & Catholick veraities of the Christian Religion*, which are more clearly laid down in the holy Scriptures, and have been owned by the Churches of Christ, generally in all ages & places, ever since the Apostles times to our dayes, and transmitted to us in their Creeds, and Confessions of Faith, and are now owned by all (worthy the name of the Christians) without dispute, through all the Christian World; let them so believe them, that they influence their Hearts and Lives throughly: And also

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all those *Confessed duties of godliness*, that all Christians are agreed in, and walk up to the practice of them, and their Souls shall certainly be secured.

Know, that notwithstanding these diversities of *Sects*, and varieties of opinions which are found amongst Christians, from which they are not privileged (as neither are those other three Religions, *Heathenisme*, *Mahometanisme*, *and Judaisme*, as before was shewed) nor shall be fully whilst we be imperfect, and know but in part, and are in part carnall as well as Spirituall, whilst the envious one shall sow Tares in the field of the Church, and it shall be the pleasure of God to suffer these things to be, that they which are approved may be made manifest: Yet know, That there are some fundamentall and *Catholick verities* of the Christian Religion, which are κρυπτόμενα, points generally believed of all, having antiquity, universality, and consent concurring with them; which the Scriptures call the foundation, 1 Cor. 3. 10, 11. *The principles of the Doctrine of Christ*, Heb. 6. 1. *The forme of sound words*, 2 Tim. 1. 13. Rom. 6. 17. *The proportion or Analogy of Faith*, Rom. 12. 6. Which have been conveyed down from the Apostles, even to us in this last

age of the World, *nor could the gates of Hel ever prevail, so far as to extirpate them.* And these are such *Confessed duties of godlinesse*, as none that have pretended to be Christians have dared openly and directly to gainsay. Now these are the points that have greatest influence on our hearts and lives, to sanctifie and change them, and to promote the life and power of godlinesse, (and rarely those questions and matters of dispute that are so hotly contested about) and these avail to the saving our Souls; upon our hearty imbracing and receiving these, or our renouncing of them, either in heart or life, depends our Salvation or Damnation. We had need therefore to set our hearts on these things, that we cordially believe these Doctrines, and practise those Duties, and so doing we shall secure our eternal Salvation.

Now for further improvement of this advice we shal more particularly inquire into these great and necessary *Doctrines* of faith and duties of godliness, and lay down some brief account of them in order to our belief and practice, and so consequently to Salvation.

1. For the Fundamental *Doctrines* of the Christian Religion. Not that I undertake to give an exact account hereof; for

to determine this (saith a learned man) *is the master-piece of all the Divines in Christendom; but only do declare those truths, which being more clearly laid down in Scripture, have been generally imbraced by all Churches worthy the Name of Christians,* (setting aside controverted points) wherein so much truth is contained, as being joyned with holy obedience, may be sufficient to bring a man to everlasting Salvation. This being premised they may be reduced to these four *Articles*.

(1) Concerning God, That there is one God of an infinite, perfect, and spirituall nature, Subsisting in three most glorious persons, *the Father, the Sonne, and the Holy Ghost*, who is the maker, preserver & Governor of all things, and intends his own glory in all his Works. That the greatest concernment of reasonable creatures is to know & acknowledge this God, to fear, love, adore and glorify him, and their chief felicity stands in his love and favour, in fullest conformity to his Image, and nearest communion with him, and in no earthly good separate from him. This is one Article of Religion necessary unto Salvation to be known and believed, and not controverted amongst Christians. Believe this throughly, and let it influence

your

your hearts and lives, so as you study to know this God, and to get acquaintance with him, to fear, love, and serve him, to own him for your Soveraign Lord & chief good.

(2.) Concerning man, *That God made man at the first in a very holy & happy estate from which he soon fell through Satans Temptation, and all mankinde became plunged into sin and misery. That We are all hainous offenders against the God of Heaven, under his dreadful wrath and the curse of the Law, barred out of Heaven and happiness, and lyable to eternal torments, if not speedily reconciled to God and pardoned, and by renewing grace sanctified and converted; which neither we, nor any meere creature is able to do for us.*

This is another Fundamentall Article of Faith, so clearly laid down in Scripture as it's beyond all controversie. Entertain it not in the notion only, but let it be so digested, that you feel your sin and misery at your heart, and dare not to continue a day longer without reconciling and pardoning mercy, and renewing and sanctifying grace, lest you perish; that you despair of any creatures help, and feel your selves eternally undone, if the God of Heaven help not.

(3) Con-

(3) Concerning Jesus Christ our Redeemer. *That the Lord Jesus Christ the only begotten Son of God, coessential and coeternal with his Father upon the appointment and designation of his Father, voluntarily undertook the office of a Saviour and Redeemer to Mankinde, & being made Man, took on him our sins, and the curse of the Law, and giving himself up a Sacrifice and an offering to God for us, purchased by his death all things conducing to grace and glory: and having by his own power arisen from the dead and ascended into heaven, he is become an all-sufficient Saviour, and will effectually confer pardon, grace and Salvation, on all those who shal truly believe in him; And that there is no other name under Heaven to be saved by, but by the name of Jesus Christ.*

This is a great and necessary Doctrine of Salvation, so clearly held forth in Scripture, that it's beyond controversie, 1 *Tim.* 3. 16. *Let this Catholick verity be received not in the Nation only, but dwel in your hearts, that you may see the infinite worth and excellency of Jesus Christ, prize him as the only Savior, close with him on all those glorious accounts and ends he was sent upon by the Father, and yield up your selves to be saved by him in his own way, and upon his own Terms,*

(4) Concerning the application of Redemp-

demption. *That our Redeemer the Lord Jesus Christ having all power in Heaven & Earth given to him, hath made a new Law or Covenant of grace & caused it to be proclaimed to the world, wherein he promises pardon and Salvation to all that shal sincerely accept and own him for their Saviour and Lord Redeemer, and truly repenting of their sins, shall rest on his death and merits alone for life, & love him above all things, and sincerely obey his Gospel-Laws and Commandments, & shal persevere in these duties to the end: And after he shal have sent his holy Spirit to work Faith and conversion in his Elect, He will certainly come again from Heaven in the glory of his Father with his mighty Angels, and by his mighty power shal raise the dead, and convene all both Quick & dead before his Judgment-Seat; and then such as did truly repent them of their sins, and sincerely believed in his Name and obeyed his Gospel, he will adjudge to Eternal glory and happinesse with himself and his Father and the holy Angels: but unbelievers and impenitent persons to eternal torments in Hell with the Devil and his Angels.* This is an unquestionable Article of the *Christian* Faith, expressly delivered in the holy Scriptures, and imbraced by the Catholick Church. *Let this truth be received, not notionally but heartily; Let*

it

to influence your hearts and lives so as you sincerely obey the Gospel, and live in the daily expectation of the coming of the Lord, and give diligence to be found of him in peace without spot, and blameless. I shal add no other Doctrinal verities besides these fundamental Articles; They are the very substance of the Christian Creed imbraced by the Church in all ages and places

2. For those *Practical Duties* in which all true *Christians* are agreed (for as there are in points of Faith fundamental Articles, so there are in the point of practice fundamental Duties.) Now these are either.

(1) Those Moral duties of the Law or Ten Commandements promulgated on *Mount Sinai*, and written by the finger of God in two Tables of stone, which *Christians* are obliged to observe as well as the *Jews* (though the Ceremonial Law, which was altogether typical and shadowed good things to come, be abolished) Yea, wee are bound to keep it in a more strict and spiritual manner then the *Jews* did interpret it formerly, as appears by Christs Sermon, *Mat* 5. This contains all duties of piety toward God, immediatly required in the first Table, *viz.* to take and accept the God of Heaven that made us and gave us Life and breath, and being for

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our God alone; to know and acknowledge him, to fear, love, and truſt in him, and ſeek his glory; to give him that external worſhip he requires in his Word, publick, private, and ſecret, as invocation of his Holy Name by prayers and praiſes, hearing and reading, meditating and conferring on his Word, receiving his Sacraments, ſanctifying his Sabbaths: Doing all this in an Holy reverent manner, ſo as Gods name may be ſanctifyed by us in his ordinances, as alſo in our ordinary communications and converſations. It likewiſe contains all Duties of righteouſneſs and charity towards Man, required in the ſecond Table, *viz.* The preſerving, as well as not injuring, of the honour and authority, of the life and chaſtity of our neighbour, in thought, word and deed; as alſo his eſtate, good name, *&c.* And loving him even as we love our ſelves, doing good unto all, *&c.* Theſe are general Duties, all Chriſtians are agreed in, Make Conſcience to practiſe theſe.

(2) Thoſe Evangelical Duties, or Commandements of the Goſpel. For beſides theſe Moral Duties of the Law which the Goſpel doth inforce alſo by renewed and more indearing arguments, there are peculiar duties required by the Goſpel, as

True

True repentance for every sin and transgression of Gods righteous and holy commands (for the Law gives no place to Repentance, but threatens death for every offence.) Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, for pardon through his blood, and Salvation through his merits: Fervent love to God and the Redeemer, who loved us and gave himself for us; who hath washed us in his blood, & made us Kings and Priests to God and his Father; Sincere indeavours to promote his glory, upon the new obligation of Redemption; and living to him as his peculiar People, being not our own but his, bought with a price; Love to all the Saints and Members of Christ, and communion with them as we have opportunity, on account of that near union in Christ; which should make us bear with smaller differences that do not violat the bond of union, whilst they hold of Christ the head, and are of the same body, &c.

These are confessed duties all Christians are agreed in, Practise them Conscionably. The Apostle gives us the sum of all these together, *Tit.* 2. 11, 12. *The grace of God that bringeth Salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts; and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.* This

This then is the Counsel I would give to such as are resolved to be Christians, but are stumbled at the variety of opinions and perswasions amongst the professors of Christianity, that they know not what to believe or what to practise; That they would believe those fundamental and Catholick truths of the Christian Religion, about which there is no dispute amongst us, and let them be so believed, that they influence their hearts and lives, and sanctify them: And also that they would conscionably practise those known and confessed duties, that all are agreed in, and then there will be no cause to question their salvation and eternal happinesse. But it is unseasonable to be contending violently about disputable points of Faith, and external forms and modes of worship and discipline, and such like questions about things not so clearly revealed in Scripture, not imbraced so generally by all true Christians and Churches, nor indeed easie to be comprehended by the weaker sort of Professors; whilst those weighty things beforenam'd, are neglected and disregarded. Such will hardly evade the imputation of Hypocrysie, being so like the *Pharisees*, that Tithed *Mint*, *Anniſe* and *Cummin*, and neglected the weighty things of the Law.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

Other Directions in points of a Secondary nature, that are not ſo clearly laid down in Scripture, nor unanimouſly received by all Chriſtians; but are Problematical, *and yet there is a neceſſity to be of the one or other perſwaſion. How to make a right choice in ſuch a Caſe.* Four Rules about this.

But what, Are not the leaſt truths of Religion worth contending for, and the ſmalleſt circumſtantials of Faith or Worſhip? Doth not God ſtand upon ſmal matters in his ſervice? Yes verily, in their due place, and after a Chriſtian manner, we may and ought to inquire after them. When we have yielded that Faith and obedience that is due to the great and more neceſſary points of Salvation, We are then to ſtudy the mind of God in other things of a ſecondary and more inferior Nature; nor is the moſt minute truth to be deſpiſed or neglected by us. That therefore we may make a wiſe choyce of the true and right way in ſuch circumſtantial and leſſe neceſſary points, as truly pious and wiſe Chriſtians differ in, which are mat-

ters *non fidei ſed queſtionum*, (as St. *Auguſtine* ſpeaks) not properly points of the *Catholick Faith*, but problematical and diſputable in the Church; and yet are neceſſitated to be of the one or other perſwaſion: I come in the next place to give ſome directions about them; for which end, obſerve theſe few Rules which will be uſefull to us herein.

Aug. de peccat. orig. chap. 23.

1. Humbly ſeek God by daily and fervent prayers and ſupplications to make his mind and will known to you herein; Lean not to your own underſtanding and wiſdome, but confeſſe how weak you are, and full of error and darkneſſe; Beſeech him to take away the vail from before your eyes, to give you underſtanding, and teach you good judgment and knowledge; that what you ſee not, he would teach you, and wherein you are otherwiſe minded, he would reveal the truth unto you; Plead his promiſes of leading you into all truth, that you ſhall be all taught of God; that he will reveal his ſecrets to ſuch as fear him, and guide the meek in the way, and lead you by his Spirit. Hang upon the Lord daily for his guidance in ſuch difficult caſes as you are at a loſs in.

2. *Search the Scriptures*, John 5. 39. and

and look well to them, they are your chart and compass to steer your course by, try all things by them, to the Law and to the testimony. Take nothing on trust from men, for the best of men may err. I think there is hardly any error in Doctrine, or corruption in Worship, but hath been brought into the Church by following the opinions and practices of some reputed godly men, more then the Scriptures: when a *Peter* shall *Judaize* and not walk uprightly, he may not only seduce by his example many ordinary Christians, but a *Barnabas* also may be carryed away from the truth by his dissimulation, *Gal.* 2. Hold close therefore to the Scriptures, those infallible Oracles, the word of truth, and inquire daily into them.

(3) If yet after prayer and searching the Scriptures, we find not the minde of God in some opinion or practice, (because it is but darkly laid down in Scripture, or at least through the darkness of minde in godly men, who cannot so well discern it) then observe this further Rule. There are some general *criteria*, or marks whereby we may discern any Doctrine or practice whether it be of God or no; We shall find them laid down in the Scriptures, and may thereby try any Doctrine or practice,

when we can not ſo clearly ſee them in the particulars, *viz.* (1) Such Doctrines and practices as are not repugnant to, but agree and correſpond with the fundamental Articles of the Chriſtian Religion, or the firſt principles, that be according to the proportion or Analogy of faith, *Rom.* 12. 6. They be of God, receive and imbrace them; but if they be not conſonant thereunto, then reject them. (2) Such Doctrines and practices as tend to holineſs, *Tit.* 1. 2. Doctrines according to godlineſs, they are of God, for he is a God of holineſs, follow them: But ſuch as tend to looſeneſſe and profaneſs are to be ſhun'd as not of God. This mark diſcovers the evil of ſuch opinions as teach men to caſt off Sabbaths, Ordinances, Scriptures, family and cloſet devotions, and other libertine principles; yet here beware on the contrary of a pretended holineſſe above what is written, of being righteous over much, above and beyond the rule of the word, this was the occaſion of Monkiſh or ſolitary living amongſt the Papiſts, of their pretended holy Orders, Vows, *&c.* And amongſt others it hath cauſed Separation, Superſtition and many other irregular Actings.

(3) Such Doctrines and waies as tend

not

not to diviſion and faction, but to peace, love, and union amongſt ſuch as fear God, thoſe are of God, and to be followed by us, 1 *Cor.* 1. 10. *Phil.* 2. 1, 2. *Eph.* 4. 3, 4, 5, 6. But the contrary to be ſhunned and avoided, *Rom.* 16, 17.

(4) Such things as tend to edification, and to further the Salvation of our ſouls, are to be received as of God, 1 *Cor.* 14. 26. *Rom.* 14. 19. But thoſe things that Miniſter Queſtions and cauſe ſtrife and contention, rather then godly edifying, are to be avoided, 1 *Tim.* 1. 4, 5.

(5) Such Opinions and practices as tend to the glory of God and of Jeſus Chriſt, and to the ſetting up his righteouſneſs and grace, and to the humbling and debaſing of man, and caſting him down from all high thoughts of his own excellency and abilities, they are to be received as from God; for this is the great deſign of the Goſpel, 1 *Cor.* 1. *a fin*, but the contrary is to be rejected.

Theſe general *Criteria* or Marks may be ſome guide to find out the right and ſafe way in ſome Doctrines and Practices that you are at a loſs in, becauſe you cannot read them ſo plainly in the word of God.

Rule 4. After you have thus done the

utmoſt you are able, to find out the mind of God in theſe controverted matters, which yet are diſputable amongſt the wiſe and godly, and you ſhall be neceſſitated to be of the one or the other perſwaſion or way; Then let every one do that which he is fully perſwaded in his own minde to be beſt and moſt pleaſing to God; nor daring to go againſt the dictates of his own Conſcience, which God hath ſet up as his Vicegerent in the Soul, nor ſubjecting himſelf to the judgment or Authority of any other, as Lord of his Faith; I ſay Believe and imbrace that opinion, and walk in that practice; But yet to this. (1) Humbly with a due ſenſe of your own weakneſs and ignorance, not proudly cenſuring and contemning ſuch as differ from your perſwaſion, but ever ready to hear what ſhall be offered for your conviction, eſpecially if it be from the wiſe and learned, and thoſe which by Gods providence are in place of eminency in the Church; being rather matter of Affliction to you, then of exalting your ſelf that you ſhould differ from them.

See *Amef. Caſ.* l. 1. c. 5 q. 1. *Sanderſ. Lect* 3. *de juram.* Sect. 10.

(2) Peaceably and without all Faction and Schiſm, not making parties for you, and

and renting from the Communion of thoſe with whom you agree in the moſt weighty and neceſſary Doctrines of Salvation, and ſo diſturbing the peace of the Church where you live: The evil of which can never be repaired by a violent contention for any truth or practice not fundamental and neceſſary unto Salvation. Here the counſel of the Apoſtle is ſeaſonable, *Rom.* 14 *If thou haſt faith, have it to thy ſelf*, and *Phil.* 3. *Whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the ſame rule, let us minde the ſame thing, & if in any thing any be otherwiſe minded, God wil reveal even this unto them.* In all thoſe principal points of faith and practice, wherein is ſuch perfect harmony, it's a manifeſt duty to hold communion, only forbearing the ſame in theſe leſſer matters, wherein according to the preſent apprehenſion the ſin and error lyeth.

(3) Chearfully and confidently, not troubling and perplexing your ſelves about ſuch a perſwaſion and practice, with fears ariſing from a ſcrupulous Conſcience, (which are like Stones in the ſhooe, troubling the Feet of him that walketh;) But with a comfortable perſwaſion that God is well pleaſed with you, ſeing you do the utmoſt you are able, to find out the minde of God in ſuch a particular; and therefore,

if

if you be in the right, he will accept it; or if through weakneſſe there be a miſtake, yet he will graciouſly pardon it, and in his good time reveal even this unto you. For if even earthly Parents or Maſters, when their Servants or Children do their utmoſt to know their minds, and to do their buſineſs, ſo as to pleaſe them, will accept their indeavours, and take all in good part, though in every *punctilio* they have not done what was expected: much more will the gracious God accept of his Children and Servants, that deſire to pleaſe him, and pardon what is amiſs in them. And indeed if not, no fleſh living could be ſaved: for who is there of the higheſt form of Chriſtians, that are aſcertained, that in every particular Doctrine and Practice (in thoſe things controverted amongſt the godly and wiſe) that they be in the right? ſeeing the beſt of men are imperfect, and may, and do err & offend. Therefore go on chearfully with full aſſurance that the Lord accepts you. This Rule the Apoſtle fully layes down, *Rom.* 14 upon occaſion of controverſies about points not neceſſary to Salvation, *viz.* Meats and Drinks and Dayes. He bids, let every one be fully perſwaded in his own mind, and act accordingly; not judging or condemning others, nor breaking the peace

and

and then he ſhould be accepted of God, & approved of men. Thus have we a ſafe Conduct to lead us in the right way in matters circumſtantial, controverted amongſt pious and wiſe Chriſtians, in points leſs neceſſary unto Salvation; as well as in matters of Fundamental, and of abſolute neceſſity thereunto.

CHAP. VII.

A cloſer Application of the foregoing Diſcourſe, to the preſent State of the Church in England; *with particular Advice in reference to the different Wayes and profeſſions found amongſt us.*

HAving given a more generall advice ſutable to all times and conditions of the Church in all places: It will be expedient next (in behalf of thoſe for whoſe benefite this diſcourſe is principally intended) to apply the former directions, to the preſent ſtate of the Church here in *England*, and thoſe many different Perſwaſions and wayes that are amongſt us.

We are a people that generally do profeſs the Chriſtian Religion, which hath been of long time tranſmitted down to us from our Anceſtors: wherein we are deeply ingaged by Education, the Laws of the Land, and manifold Obligations. But it is much

much to be desired that the Common sort of Christians, were better instructed in the grounds and Reasons of the entertainment of this Religion (rather then of the other three before mentioned, *Heathenism*, *Mahometanism*, and *Judaism*,) and that they might gain a clear and distinct knowledge of the great and fundamental Articles thereof, and be throughly grounded in the certainty and excellency of it; A thing which is much wanting in the vulgar sort through their too great negligence and careleſneſſe about things ſpirituall: but of exceeding dangerous conſequence to their Souls, as expoſing them to profaneneſs and Error, if not to totall Apoſtacy. And therefore this duty (though before hinted) deſerves to be reinforced with the ſtrongeſt perſwaſions.

But although we all be Chriſtians in profeſſion, We are ſadly crumbled into ſuch Diverſities of Sects and perſwaſions, occaſioned much through the licentiouſneſſe of War, & relaxation of Government amongſt us of which occaſion Satan and our corrupt natures have made too great improvment; That is it moſt difficult for weak and ignorant perſons to find out the right and ſafe way amongſt them, and to joyn themſelves unto; This temptation having led very many

many into errors by-wayes & pernicious, and others into *Atheiſm*. We ſhall therefore attempt to give ſome directions what courſe to ſteer herein; what opinions and Sects to ſhun and avoid: and what people and principales we ſhould cloſe withal. For it would greatly conduce to the peace and welfare of the Church, and to the ſafety of mens ſouls, to be duly informed, *What Chriſtians (or Societyes of Chriſtians) they be, with whom communion may be held, and how far; as alſo who they be that are utterly to be avoided*: it being uſual with the vulgar ſort of Chriſtians, who ſometimes abound in zeal, but are much wanting in knowledge, to cloſe with the moſt pernicious Principales and Wayes, where any ſtronger temptations inſinuate themſelves; then with thoſe that are far more ſound and Orthodox, if they have taken up a prejudice againſt them, and ſo have the faith of Chriſt with reſpect of perſons. We ſhall therefore take a Survey of the different perſwaſions & wayes amongſt us which may be branched into theſe two. 1. The Way & profeſſion which is publickly owned by Authority, and hath the Law of the Land for its Sanction. 2. Thoſe Perſwaſions, or Wayes, that are taken up by private perſons contrary to the Law of the Nation.

For

For these latter (beginning there first) They are, as exceeding many, so of a very different nature; some retaining the Fundamental Principles and Duties of Christianity, necessary unto Salvation, and differing only in lesser matters, controverted in the Church of Christ: others that overthrow the very Foundation it self.

Those that overthrow the Foundations of Christianity, and differ about points necessary unto Salvation, are too many.

In which rank we shall place the Papists first of all, because most considerable, and above all others most formidable. Its true indeed, There hath been in the Popish Church, all along to this day, continued such a System of saving Truths (which God hath of his great mercy preserved in the greatest *Anti-Christian Apostacy*) as being truly believed and obeyed (other Soul-destroying errours in the mean time, either not known or not cordially imbraced,) might be effectuall to the Salvation of many that lived and dyed within that Church: But yet Popery it self, understanding thereby that Religion which consists of so many new Articles of Faith (utterly unknown to the old Church of *Rome* in its purity, but now ratifyed in the Council of *Trent*, and required to be recieved of all men [illegible]

pain of *Anathema*) which plainly overthrow many of the great Articles of the *Catholick* Faith; as also of such grosse Idolatries and Superstitious Fopperies *&c.* This, *I* say, is such a Religion, that none that love their Salvation should close with. This *Babylon* we shold have no communion with, lest we communicate in her Plagues. As saith the voice from Heaven, *Revel.* 18 4: *Come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.* The grounds of our withdrawing from that Religion, are 1. Their many dangerous errors in matters of Faith, overthrowing directly the very Foundations of Christiantie. To instance in some Their Doctrine of Transubstantiation, overthroweth the truth of Christs humane Nature; Their proper Sacrifice, his only Sacrifice for sin offered once for all; Their Doctrine of merits plainly destroyeth the merits of Jesus Christ: The multitude of Mediators amongst them, deny That only Mediator betwixt God and man, the man Jesus Christ; 1 *Tim.* 2. 5. Their Sacrificing Priests overthrow Christs Priestly office. Their vilifying the Scriptures, and setting up their unwritten Traditions to be received with equall reverance with them, *&c.* overthrows Christs Propheticall Offices.

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The Kingly Office of Christ, is overthrown by the Popes usurpations, dispensing with the Laws of God, and setting up other Laws of his own devising, and Lording it over the Consciences of Men. The great Article of Remission of sins, and free Justification, through the grace of God in Jesus Christ, is overthrown by their Pardons, Indulgences and Doctrine of merit, and humane Satisfactions. 2. Their abominable Idolatries in point of Worship, as Angel-worship, Saint-worship, Relique-worship, Image-worship, *&c.* 3. Their prophane Sacriledge, robbing the people of the bread of life, the holy Scriptures: the Cup in the Lords Supper; Nay almost, of the whole Worship of God, causing it to be performed in a Language the Vulgar understand not. 4. Their cruelty and blood shed, wherein *Rome* Papal exceeds *Rome* Ethnicall. 5. Their Spiritual Tyranny in exacting blind obedience in matters of Faith, as the *Philistims* pulled out the eyes of *Sampson*, and led him whither they would: In burdening Christians with innumerable Ceremonies and Superstitions, destroying the substance of Religion, 6. Their proud usurpations over Kings and Princes. 7. The Notorious Schism they are guilty of, (worse then that of the *Novatians* and *Donatists* of old

old) whereby they not only cast off the Reformed Churches; but the *Muscovites* and *Grecians* in *Europe*, The *Ægyptian* and *Æthiopian* Churches in *Affrick*, & all these great companies of *Christians* scatter'd all over *Asia* even from *Constantinople* to the *East Indies*; Because they are not the Popes subjects, they wil not account them Christs; for they declare, determine and pronounce, its of absolute necessity unto Salvation, for every humane Creature to be subject to the Pope of *Rome*. 8. Add hereunto, their unsufferable wickedness, overspreading that Church, and their allowance thereof by giving *L*icences to uncleanness, *Sodomy*, prostituting pardons for mony, dispensations with Gods *L*aws, *&c.* In all which the *Romish* Church is incorrigible, pretending unerring Infallibilitie, and the Pope himself wil be supreme Judge alone in all these Cases. For these and the like grounds (which cannot all be here enumerated) Its necessary for all good Christians to beware of *P*opery, and have no Peace with *Rome*, till she return to her antient Primitive puritie.

Others there are also that err in Fundamental points and necessary unto salvation, as *Anti-trinitarians*, *Anti-Scripturists*, *Ari-*

ans,

ans, Socinians, &c. The last of which Sects is esteemed by the learned, the very Sink into which all Heresies of former and latter times have emptied themselves, and directly leades men to *Mahometanism, Judaism*, or *Atheism*. These deny the Doctrine of the Trinity (a fundamental Point, and necessary to Salvation) and the Deity of Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Ghost, Reject the Satisfaction of Christ, and maintain Justification by works; Refuse such Articles of the Faith, as they cannot comprehend with their Reason, *&c.* These Sects as almost all Churches (former and latter) and Divines in their *Syncretisms*, have banished out of the Lines of Christian Communication: so it becomes all persons to avoid them as pests, and enemies of Christianity, and to have no followship with them. I shal instance only in one Sect more, of such as err in Fundamental points; who in respect of their want of learning and outward accomplishments, are contemptible; yet in respect of their number and their singular obstinancy in their way, whereby they amuse the Vulgar, are not to be passed by *viz.* The Quakers, although Quakerism cannot properly be called a Sect of Christians, but rather it's a totall Apostacy from Christianity; for except ing it be the

have the name of Christ in their Mouths, they scarce retain any Article of the Christian Faith. The light in all men they extoll, as the only sufficient rule to walk by, to the apparent slighting of the Scriptures and Preaching; so that if the Question be asked, what advantage hath the *Christian* above the naked *Indian?* We cannot answer as the Apostle, *Rom.* 3. 2. *Much every way?* chiefly, because *unto them is committed the Oracles of God.* The Doctrine of the Trinity they openly deny; The Person of Jesus Christ, as to his humane Nature, with all his Offices assigned to him by his Father, they utterly reject, (though this is an *Arcanum* that is kept hid from their Novices.) They call not upon God in the Name and Mediation of Jesus Christ; They trust not in his death for pardon and Salvation, but in a pretended sinless perfection; they deny any necessiy of the Special grace of the Spirit to Conversion and Sanctification, saying, the Light within them is sufficient hereunto, and scoff at them that pray for more; bidding them heed that only, and it will lead them from sin to God. Sabbath

I charge not every particular quaker with all these Errours (for many understand not what they hold) But mention what I finde asserted in their printed Pamphlets.

bath and Sacraments, and all inſtituted Worſhip they caſt off; the great Doctrine of the Reſurrection, Laſt Judgement, Heaven and Hell they turn into Allegories, &c. Theſe, and other things conſidered, it appears that they plainly overthrow the foundations of Chriſtianity, & therefore Chriſtians can have no Communion with that way.

Thus where differences are in Points deſtructive to the Foundations of Religion, and againſt the Eſſentials of Faith, Worſhip and obedience: There can be no cloſure and agreement, but a total withdrawing is neceſſary ſo far as civil Relations and Offices will permit.

We come next to conſider theſe other Perſwaſions and Parties among us, that (agreeing in all the neceſſary points of Salvation, yet) differ in things that be leſs neceſſary; though ſome be of greater, and ſome of leſs moment then others These differences be either in Points of Doctrine, or in matters of Worſhip and Diſcipline. In Points of Doctrine we have *Arminians*, *Antinomians*, *&c.* In matters of Worſhip and Diſcipline, we have *Anabaptiſts* (I mean ſuch as be ſound in the main Doctrines of faith, but err only in the point of Baptiſm) *Independents*, *Presbyterians*, *&c.* Now about theſe differing wayes, Take theſe brief

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Directions ſutable to thoſe generall Rules before lay'd down.

1. Account them all as Chriſtians, if they be ſerious in the matters of Religion, and their lives anſwerable; let not any evil repreſentations of their opinions or wayes, or odious and invidious conſequences drawn from their Principles, but diſowned by them, ſo far alienate your hearts from them, as not to account them Chriſtians & Brethren; ſeeing they retain the Fundamentals of Chriſtianity and hold the head Chriſt, though they build on the precious Foundation, Wood, Hay, Stubble. Who is in all things free from Errour? What Church or perſon upon Earth?

2. Have the greateſt reſpect, and the moſt intimate friendſhip for thoſe in whoſe Principles is greateſt purity, that come nigheſt the rule, and who moſt follow after peace & holineſſe, and lay out themſelves more to promote the greateſt truths of the Goſpel, and the power of Godlineſſe, then their private perſwaſions: But as for them who with the Wilde fire of their Zeal, will ſet the Church on a flame, and are more for making Proſelytes for their own way, then for ſeeking the welfare of the Church, and the edification and Salvation of ſouls, avoid them.

3. If God caſt your lot into theſe places

or Countreys, where those Professions or Ways are set up; & you cannot enjoy that way of serving God, that you approve as most pure; its an unquestionable duty to hold Communion there; in *France* & *Holland* with the Presbyterians, in *Germany* with the *Lutherans*; & in other Countreys with those other perswasiõs before named; provided the condition of thy communion be not to give thy allowance to any thing that is evil, but in that particular thou mayest be forborn. Communion with such Churches where many corruptions and abuses are, (if the foundations of faith, and essentials of worship be preserved) ought to be maintained, with a due care to keep our selves only from the sins of such a Church, else the Apostle would have enjoyned separation from the Church of *Corinth*, for the corruptions found there; and the Novatians, Donatists, and others in the antient Church were unjustly taxed, for withdrawing from her Communion for laxness of Discipline, or other corruptions which they apprehended to be therein. This duty our Church of *England* hath taught by her own practice, who hath ever owned the reformed churches beyond Sea for *Sister-Churches*, & given them the right hand of Fellowship; though differing from her in some matters of an inferiour nature.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

Wherein the great controverſies of Communion with, or Separation from the Church of England *is diſcuſſed. A view of what is therein praiſe-worthy, and what is diſallowable in the judgment of thoſe that ſcruple Communion. Directions ſuted thereunto.*

WE have ſpoken of thoſe different wayes and perſwaſions found amongſt private perſons without, and againſt the owning and approbation of Authority, and given advice in reference to them: We are next to conſider of that profeſſion publickly ſet up by Authority, and that hath the civil Sanction of the Laws of this Land.

No ſober perſon can gainſay, But this deſerves a moſt ſerious and impartial conſideration; partly in reſpect of that Duty we owe to thoſe in Authority, to whom God hath committed the care of Religion, and the ſettling of it in their Dominions, in ſuch a way as they think moſt agreeable to the Rule of the Word, and hath injoyned us obedience to them in the Lord; partly in reſpect of our own welfare, who may elſe ſuffer the penalty of the Laws, and had need to ſee to it, if we obey, that we

do it with a good Conſcience, and if we ſuffer, that we ſuffer for the Truth, and not as evil doers; And partly in reſpect of the peace and welfare of the Church, that we do not groundleſly make a Rent therein, and thereby (as much as in us lyeth) to procure the ruine thereof, for all Diviſion tends to Deſtruction.

It would therefore ſeriouſly be inquired, Whether it be a duty for Chriſtians to hold Communion with the Church of *England* according to its preſent ſtate and adminiſtrations? or, Whether Separation from it, is warrantable and neceſſary, and how far?

For the Reſolving of which Queſtion, we ſhal take an Account of thoſe things that are commendable in the ſaid Church in the judgment of thoſe that ſcruple Communion with her; and alſo of what things they diſallow and diſlike in her: And then caſt up, Whether it will warrant ſeparation, or how far, according to the ſame Rules of Concord we have proceeded upon, with thoſe of the other Profeſſions before named.

And firſt, it will not be denyed by all Diſſenters (that have underſtanding and ſobriety in them) But that here is to be found (1.) A clear profeſſion of all thoſe Fundamental points of Faith, which are accounted amongſt Chriſtians neceſſary

unto

unto Salvation; yea such a poor Confession of other points of a Secondary, and more inferiour Nature, as that there's scarce any other Church in the World, that God hath blessed with a greater purity in point of Doctrine then the Church of *England*.

Homily of time and place of Prayer. Part 2.

(2.) Here also is the Christian Sabbath imbraced with much greater honour then in many other Reformed Churches; the publick Ordinances of preaching Prayer, Sacraments, administred, and all the Substantials of Worship owned *viz.* That God only is to be Worshipped & no Creatures, Saints, or Angels; That he is to be Worshipped only in and through Christ as our only Mediator and Advocate; that he is to be Worshipped in Spirit & truth, & to be Sanctifyed of them that come near unto him

(3) As for Fundamental Duties and Points of Practice, here is a Profession of Faith in Jesus Christ alone, for Salvation; of Repentance from dead works, and love to Jesus Christ, and to all that are his; and obedience to the Moral Law of the Ten Commandements. Here is a profest Renuntiation of the Devil, the World, and the flesh, with all their sinful works and Lusts. All these call for an ingenuous and candid acknowledgment. How would our fore-

fore-Fathers that lived in former times of Popery, have rejoyced to have seen such things in *England*? We should blesse God that hath vouchafed such a mercy to us; Honour our Defender of the Faith, under whose protection this Profession is made; and shew more Reverence to the Church then many do, who will pettishly slight all this, because they have not all they would have.

Secondly, we are next to consider those things that are disliked by such as scruple Communion; which are especially reducible to three Heads. (1.) Government and Discipline, which though it be various in the Reformed Churches, yet notwithstanding they hold mutual Communion with each other, as Sister-Churches; and many particular wise and godly Members of those Churches hold Communion in the Ordinances of God administred in the Churches of different wayes, occasionally when they reside amongst them.

(2.) Forms of Prayers and Ceremonies, concerning which some disallow all set and imposed forms whatsoever; others only dislike the form by law established, accounting it inconvenient, disorderly and defective, and rejecting the Ceremonies: yet wise and sober persons generally (Non-Conformists

formists as well as Conformists) reckon external forms and modes of Divine Service, not of the Essentials of Worship; but adjuncts thereunto belonging, *E. G.* The Essence of Prayer lies in lifting up true desires to God in the name of Christ, for things agreeable to his will, in the elevation of the heart or mind to God, *&c.* Words are but the outward clothing of these desires and holy affections, or the Chariot wherein they mount up to Heaven. And for the Ceremonies used in *England*, they are utterly denied to be any parts of Worship, and declares only circumstantial appendants thereunto (see the Preface to the Common Prayer, and Canons, *&c.* *Amef Cas* l. 4. c. 14 &c. 17. *Prestons daily Exercise.*

(3.) Corruption in manners, and that both in People and in Ministers, which when found in the latter, makes the offence far greater, as when the Sons of *Eli* were wicked, they made the offerings of the Lord to be abhorred. These things premised, We shall now offer our advice in this great Controversie, and annex such Reasons thereto, as shall evidence it both safe and profitable; We lay it down in three particulars.

1. To beware of a Total withdrawing from

from the publick Aſſemblies in the Church of *England*, and the worſhip of God therein (whilſt the Fundamentals of Faith, and eſſentials of Worſhip are therein maintained) b cauſe you apprehend therein ſome corruptious, defects, additions, or errors which are circumſtantial.

This advice though it might be urged with manifold arguments, yet the Brevity I intend in this Diſcourſe, requires me to give but a few.

(1.) If you will make the Scripture your Rule herein, you may ſee ſo clear a Beam of Light (all along through the ſame) witneſſing hereunto, That it is a wonder any ſhould be found to Queſtion this duty. Conſider the Prophets and people of God in the time of the Old Teſtament, did they ſeparate from the true Worſhip of God in the *Jewiſh* Church (or teach any to do it) when there were very great defects & corruptions therein? There was at ſome times a defect of ſome Solemn Ordinances for a long time together, as Circumciſion, the Paſſeover, *&c.* Some Monuments of Idolatry remaining amongſt them, and the people (many of them) defiled therewith; Very great corruptions of manners, not only in the People, but in the Prieſts, as in *Eli*'s Sons, *&c.* Yet whilſt the true

Worſhip

Worſhip of God was continued amongſt them, there's neither precept or practice to be found of total withdrawing therefrom. Indeed the godly *Levites* & People did withdraw from the Idolatrous Worſhip of *Jeroboams Calves*, leaving their dwellings and going to *Jeruſalem*, 2 *Chro.* 11.14,16. but no mention is made of withdrawing from the true Worſhip of God for ſuch cauſes as were before named.

About the time of our Saviour Chriſt, and his Apoſtles, the State of that Church was greatly corrupted (by many degrees more then any ſober perſon can judge the preſent Church in this Nation now to be) The Interpreters of the Law had taken away the Key of knowledge, and that little knowledge that remained, was miſerably corrupted, not only with the Leaven of the *Phariſees*, but with the damnable Hereſie of the *Sadducees*; The Worſhip of God much prophaned and the Temple polluted and made a Den of Theeves; A multitude of Superſtitious Ceremonies introduced that were a burden too heavy to bear; The power of godlineſs ſubverted, whilſt ſmall things were exactly minded, the weighty things of the Law as Judgment and the love of God were neglected; a general over ſpreading of ſin, not only amongſt the Vulgar,

gar, but the Prieſts themſelves, and that in their Miniſtration and calling, as well as in their Lives, &c. Yet did not the Godly withdraw from the Communion of that Church for the ſame. We read that *Simeon*, *Anna*, and Others continued in the Temple Worſhipping God daily; Holy *Zachary* forſook not his Prieſtly Office, but Miniſtred in his courſe in the Temple; And Chriſt himſelf was circumciſed, and preſented to the Lord in the Temple with the accuſtomed Sacrifices offer'd for him, according to the Law of *Moſes*; he kept the Paſſeover, and other Feaſts of that Church, was frequently in the Temple, and in the Synagogues with his Diſciples, allowed of the hearing of thoſe that ſate in *Moſes*'s Chair (only gives caution againſt their Errours and bad lives) ſent divers to the Prieſts to Offer their accuſtomed Offerings, required in the Law; Nor did he in the dayes of his fleſh wholly forſake the Communion of that Church; nor his Diſciples after him, untill the *Jews* did contradict and blaſpheme the Truth, obſtinately refuſe to owne the Lord Jeſus for the Chriſt, and perſecute to death the Profeſſors of the Name of Chriſt.

In the Churches of *Corinth*, *Galatia*, &c. We read of great and dangerous Errors in Faith,

Faith, grievous pollutions in Worſhip, & ſad miſcarriages in Manners; yet concerning withdrawing from theſe Churches, we find not a word; but many reprehenſions of their Schiſms and Diviſions. In the Churches of *Aſia*, there were ſeveral things they were blamed for, as well as ſome things commended in them: But no hints of Separation from thoſe Churches, for thoſe evils found in them. So that the Scriptures give no countenance to total withdrawing from ſuch Churches, where many corruptions are, whilſt the eſſentials of Religion are preſerved.

Some Scriptures indeed are very impertinently alledged for this practice (which may be cleared from the undeceiving of the weak in a few words) ſuch as 2 *Cor.* 6 14, 15, 16, 17. Which ſpeaks of ſeparation from Infidels and Idolaters in their Idolatries, and ungodly fellowſhips, not of withdrawing from Chriſtian Aſſemblies, in the true Worſhip of God. So alſo 1 *Cor.* 5. 11. and 2 *Theſſ.* 3. 6, 14. Which Scriptures ſhew it a duty to withdraw from private perſons living in notorious, ſcandalous ſins, for ſhaming the offendors, and preſerving the Churches; but ſpeak not a word of withdrawing from the true Worſhip of God in the publick Aſſemblies

blies of the Church, becauſe of controverſal practiſes (yea, for ſome real evils therein) for this will tend to the deſtruction of the Church, which is contrary to the end of all Church-cenſures being for Edification, not for deſtruction, 2 *Cor* 10. 8.

As for that Scripture, *Revel* 18.3. *Come out of* Babylon *&c.* It may warrant a withdrawing from the Idolatrous Worſhip of *Rome*, and the Abominations of Popery; from which (we before ſhewed) it's the duty of every good Chriſtian, that loves his Salvation, to depart: but it's groſly abuſed when it's made to plead for Separation from any of the reformed Churches, where (through the mercy of God) the Fundamentals of Faith, and eſſentials of Worſhip are maintained; ſo that we ſee the ſcriptures will not warrant ſuch Separation.

(2.) Or if you will Reverence the general ſuffrage of the Chriſtian Church, and of the moſt eminent Saints and Martyrs living therein, ever ſince Chriſts time to us (which ſurely however ſome ſlight, yet there's no ſmal weight in it, elſe the Apoſtle would not plead, 1 *Cor*. 11.16. We have no ſuch cuſtom nor the Churches of Chriſt) The moſt eminent Servants of Chriſt in in all Ages have conſtantly held and practiſed Communion with thoſe Churches where

where they lived, although very often there were far greater corruptions therein, then can be found this day amongst us, (as those that are acquainted with Antiquity know well) and have ever blamed those that have left the Churches Communion for such causes as were above named; witness the Censures past against the *Novatians*, *Donatists*, *Audæans*, &c.

As for our Separation from *Rome*, our Protestant Divines plead the Fundamental errr found therein, and gross Idolatries (which they must necessarily communicate in, if they withdraw not) persecution. *&c.* and not lesser matters. Did not those hinder? they profess a readinesse to communicate with her; and that they depart from her no further, then she departs from Christ.

(3.) Will you regard the judgment of the most eminent Divines (of almost all perswasions amongst Protestants) that have lived in this and the former Age, [speaking expresly concerning Communion with the Church of *England*.] Then know, 1. That all forraign Divines of other Reformed Churches have approved of Communion with her, and been ready on all occasions to give their fullest Testimony of their dislike of rigid Separation from her. 2. All fore-

former Non-Conformists (who did differ in some smaller matters of Ceremonies, &c. desiring a forbearance as to their practice in those things, yet) have fully declared against Separation from the Church of *England*, witness the writings of very many of them (worthy a serious perusal at this day,) *viz. Cartwright, Hildersham, Bradshaw, Bayne, Ball*, many Others, and witness their practice formerly, and at this day. 3. *Independents*, See *Apol. Narration of the five dissenting Brethren.* page 5. 6. Who fully testify against the practice "of the *Brownists*, or rigid Separatists, "whose fatal miscarriages and Shipwrack, "they call Landmarks to forewarn of those "Rocks and Shelves they ran upon. And "declare their sincere profession to God "and the World, that all that consciousness "of the defilements they conceived to "cleave to the true Worship of God in the "Congregations of *England*, or of the "unwarranted power in Church-gover-"nours exercised therein, did never work "in them any other *thought*, much less o-"pinion, but that *Multitudes* of the Pa-"rochial Congregations were the true "Churches of Christ, and the Ministry "thereof a true Ministry, much less did "it ever *enter into their hearts*, to judge "them

"them Anti-Christian, for so (they say)
"they could not but see they should also
"condemn the Churches of *Scotland*, *Hol-*
"*land*,&c. as no Churches, which to ima-
"gine was an *horrour* to their thoughts,
"Yea, that they always professed, and in
"those times when the Churches of *Eng-*
"*land* were the most, either actually over-
"spread with defilements, or in the grea-
"test danger thereof, and when them-
"selves had no hopes of ever visiting this
"Land in peace; that they would hold a
"Communion with them as the Churches
"of Christ. And yet they add further.
"Besides this profession, as a real Testimo-
"ny, some of them, after they were actu-
"ally in the Congregational way did Bap-
"tize their Children in the Parishional
"Congregations; and occasionally admit-
"ted to the Lords Supper in their Chur-
"ches, some visiting them in their *Exile*,
"upon that relation fellowship and Com-
"membership they held in the Parish
"Churches in *England*.

It may be some will say, they have more light now, then those eminent Divines had in former times: But they bewray herein too great ignorance and arrogance; this point having been far more dissensed in former, then in these present times; in

which the prejudice of moſt is ſuch, they have ſcarce conſidered what hath been ſaid againſt their opinions.

(4.) If you withdraw totally upon this Account, you ſhould then ſeparate from all the Churches, that now are or ever have been in the World; for what Churches are ſo pure but they have ſome defects, errors or corruptions? For the Primitive Church, even 1260 years agone and upwards, there were as great corruptions in it, as any you can finde here, and greater alſo. For the Churches of your own perſwaſion, do you think them altogether perfect? Wiſe and underſtanding men are able to finde ſome things amiſs; yea ſome of your ſelves have acknowledged all things are not according to their deſire: ſo as if you will bear with nothing but reject all parts of Communion, becauſe you cannot cloſe in ſome things, you muſt ſeparate from them too, and ſo turn Seekers, or become Hermites or Anchorites, and live alone; and at length ſeparate from your ſelves alſo, becauſe ſome things will appear blame-worthy in you alſo; whither will this lead you?

(5.) Have you no more love to, and care of the publick ſolemn Worſhip of God, then to caſt off all publick Ordinances,

ſay, becauſe you diſlike ſome things in the Churches, where they are adminiſtred? It's the greateſt glory God hath in all the World to be ſolemnly Worſhipped in the publick aſſemblies: But if all ſhould withdraw from them for ſuch offence, what publick worſhip ſhould God have in this Nation? ſeeing other perſwaſions are not permitted to meet; nay, where would it be found in the whole World? ſeeing there's no Church on Earth, but hath ſome corruptions.

(6.) Let it be conſidered how unchriſtian it is, to depart from the ſolemn Ordinances of Gods worſhip in thoſe Churches where the preſence of Chriſt is yet continued in them; have you any warrant to leave them, before Chriſt leave them? when God was greatly provoked by the *Jewiſh* Church, ſo as he was about to remove from his Sanctuary, and ſtood at the Threſhold ready to leave them, we finde many godly ones mourning for the abominations of the times, but none haſtening to depart from that Church before the Lord departed. Now can you deny the preſence of the Lord in the Aſſemblies of the Church of *England*, wherein (as before was ſhewed) the eſſentials of Faith and Worſhip be preſerved? if God ſhould be as unmerci-

ful as man is uncharitable, then wo to all the Churches of Christ throgh the World, nay, wo to your selves. But I question not but there are thousands can seal to the presence of Christ in the Congregations of *England* at this day, as well as in former times, wherein the same Corruptions (at which so much offence is taken now) were urged to plead for a separation then. Let such as cry out so much of Popery in others, beware of that miserable Popish error, they restrain the Church and the priviledges thereof (the presence of Christ and Salvation, *&c.*) to their own Sect and Party; and in the mean time casting off the far greater part of the Catholick Church that maintain all the Essentials of Faith and Worship.

(7.) I might enumerate the many great mischiefs that follow upon such unwarrantable Separation. It plainly tends to the dishonor of Christ, and the reproach of the Christian Religion; To the hinderance of the success of the Gospel and the Salvation of Souls; To overthrow the Worship of God, and to open a Gap to *Atheism* and prophaness, to *Heresie* and *Popery*, &c. yea to the utter ruine of the Christian Church *Mat.* 12. 25.

But it may seem needless to spend more words

words in ſo clear a caſe: nor ſhould I have ſaid thus much, had not I been compelled thereto by the uncatholick (nay, I confidently call it unchriſtian) practice of many well meaning people, through their too great prejudice in other Temptations, who do totally withdraw themſelves from the publick Congregations in *England* and the true Worſhip of God therein.

2. Having given my advice to hold Communion with the Churches of *England* in the True Worſhip of God, notwithſtanding the corruptions ſuppoſed to be therein. I do next adviſe, on the other hand, not to communicate with her (nor with any Church in the World) in any evil, but if any thing profeſſed or practiſed therein, be found really ſinfull (which may be ſuppoſed of any Church upon Earth) in that thing to withdraw and have no fellowſhip in it, to keep your ſelves pure from the ſame; yea, I ſhal add further, if there be any thing that ſhall but appear ſinful to thee, (thy Conſcience, after humble and diligent ſearching of the Word, telling thee, this is ſin) then to ſuſpend thy conſent or practice, in that particular, till it appear otherwiſe to thee. I would be here ſo far from urging any to do that act, that a truly tender Conſcience

upon probable grounds may ſcruple as ſinful; that I would rather perſwade ſuch to ſuſpend their acting therein, till they be better convinced of the lawfulneſſe of it; * and (ſuppoſing it be a thing not in its own nature neceſſary, but among things diſputable and tolerable) I would rather become an humble Suitor to Authority (could my interceſſion any whit avail herein) for Indulgence in ſuch a caſe; then to be a violent inforcer of any, by Terrours or Puniſhments of the Law, to go againſt their Conſciences to pleaſe men.

* *Sanderſ. de Juram* p. 84. The dictate of Conſcience whether right or erroneous, ever bindeth not to act againſt it.

3. Yet becauſe Conſcience may be deluded, and my call that ſinfull, which is lawful, and a duty; and ſo induce men to withdraw in ſuch Acts of Communion, as neither the Law of God, nor men will allow them to withdraw from: for poſſibly the Devil may get into the Conſciences of men, and delude them; And the Conſcience may tell one, he muſt ſeparate from Baptiſm, becauſe Infant-Baptiſm is Anti-Chriſtian; Another he muſt withdraw from the Lords Supper, becauſe of mixt Communion therein; A third from the hearing of the Word, becauſe the call

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of Ministers is Anti-Christian; A fourth, he must cast off Sabbaths, yea Scriptures and all Gospel Ordinances, because abolished. (All this we have too sad experience of in our times) Let therefore every good Christian labour for a due information of his Conscience in such points as he Scruples Communion in, and not think his bare plea of Conscience wil warrant his total neglect of any duty. Though his suspending his own actings (till he may satisfie Conscience about them) may be granted: yet possibly a total neglect in some things, will not be granted *Impune*, by the Law of God or man.

* Now here it may be expected I should offer my help toward the satisfying Conscience in such Scruples, as commonly do occurr (this day) to those that withdraw in whole or in part from the Communion of the Church of *England* in its present State and Administrations. But to do this fully, would too much disproportion this part of my discourse, to the other parts aforegoing; I rather chuse to send them to those Treatises of such eminent Non-Conformists, as have written fully on this subject-especi-

* An erring Conscience cannot discharge any from a duty, being not a Law-maker, but subject to the Law. *Parisiens.*

especially to Mr. *W. Bradshaw's* Book of the unreasonableness of separation prefaced to, & published by Dr. *Ames*; and to Mr. *Jo. Ball* his tryal of the grounds tending to separation, * only recommending a few general Rules, which being observed, may be useful in order thereunto, and so conclude my Discourse.

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* *The Reader is Advertised, that there is Published in Print, an Aswer to that part of Mr.* Ball's *Book, which is a Discourse of the lawfulness of a stinted Liturgy and set forms of Prayer, under the name of Mr.* Jo. Cotton. *The Answer is highly valued by some, but by comparing the Discourse and the Answer together, it may be seen, that great injury is done to Mr.* Ball *and to Mr.* Cotton *both, and also that the Reader is grosly abused by it; for it is not that Discourse Printed at* Cambridge, 1640. *which is therein answered; (but probably some imperfect Notes, before that was published) which is evident, not only because the number and order of the Arguments answered do differ from those laid down in that Discourse; But especially because the principal things given in answer by Mr.* Cotton, *are so fully spoken*

to by Mr. Ball *herein, (by way of reply to* Johnſon, Greenwood *and others, that formerly objected the ſame things;) that there ſeems nothing more requiſite to be ſaid by way of reply thereunto. Thus much was needfull to be certifyed, becauſe ſome have ſlighted Mr.* Balls *Book, not deeming it worth reading; becauſe ſufficiently anſwered by Mr.* Cotton, *whereas indeed this Book may ſerve for a ſufficient reply to his Anſwer.*

CHAP. IX.

Wherein are laid down ſome general Rules of Caution to preſerve Chriſtians from raſh and unjuſt ſeparation. The Concluſion of the Diſcourſe.

ALthough the anſwering all objections, and ſatisfying every ſcruple that may occurr about this point of Communion with the Congregations in *England*, is a work too large to be undertaken in theſe Papers; and indeed needleſs in reſpect of that abundant pains taken therein by thoſe Writers before referred to; yet becauſe I may not leave the ſober and humble Chriſtian, altogether without help, that is deſirous to find ſomething here,

here, that may ſatisfy his Conſcience about the premiſes; I ſhal lay down ſome general Rules of caution, which being duly conſidered and improved, may through the bleſſing of the Lord much conduce to prevent or heal raſh and unjuſt ſeparation, which are theſe that follow.

1. Do not raſhly ſeparate for ſuch things as have been found in almoſt all the Churches of Chriſt upon Earth, both in former and latter times: the reaſon is, becauſe (though we ſay not, the Church is ſo abſolutely Infallible, that it cannot err in the leaſt particular; yet we may eaſily defend That) the Univerſal Church in all places and ages cannot err ſo dangerouſly, ſo as good Chriſtians ought not to keep communion with her, but are bound to make ſeparation from her; for this would inferr that ſhe hath wholly fallen from Chriſt and her bond of Union with him is diſſolved, and he is no longer preſent with her (for till then Chriſtians are not wholly to ſeparate from her) yea, that Chriſt hath no Church in the World, *&c.* And if ſo, what will become of the promiſes of Chriſt, that *Hel gates ſhal not prevail againſt her*, that *he will be with her to the end of the World*; that *he will ſend his Spirit to lead her into all Truth*, and *it ſhall abide with her for ever*;

which

which promiſes though directly and primarily they were made to the Apoſtles, who had the ſpecial preſence of Chriſt and the guidance of his holy Spirit in the moſt eminent manner, yet were made to them for the behoofe of the Church Univerſal, and ſhal be verified to it.

This duly conſidered, would much prevent the ſcandal taken at Biſhops, at forms of Prayer, &c. For who is there (if acquainted with the State of the Church) that knows not that Biſhops (even in a ſuperiority of power and jurisdiction over other Miniſters) have been in the Church of Chriſt almoſt univerſally from the Apoſtles times to our dayes; and that ſet Forms of Prayers, have been of exceeding long continuance in the Chriſtian Curches, through the World. Therefore ſuch as ſeparate for theſe things now, muſt have been led by the ſame principle to have ſeparated from almoſt all the Churches of Chriſt upon Earth; which thing how dangerous it is, needs not much to be ſpoken to her, to manifeſt the ſame.

2. Let not inconveniences, defects, additions, or errors Circumſtantial cauſe you to withdraw Communion wholly from the Churches of Chriſt in the ſubſtantial duties of Gods Worſhip, where the eſſentials

tials are preſerved; though ſome leſſer evils may be found, do not utterly refuſe Communion there. The Lord Jeſus wil not reject ſuch Churches, therefore do not you. This hath paſſed for good Divinity generally amongſt Non-Conformiſts who acknowledge Communion may be maintained, where ſome divine inſtitutions are wanting, and ſome humane additaments meerly extrinſical are joyned to Divine Worſhip. They ſay that where the ſubſtantials of Worſhip are preſerved, though the external forms and modes be more inconvenient, diſorderly and defective; yet its lawfull, yea a duty to offer ſuch Worſhip to God rather then none at all. That what ever is not in our power to reform, it ſhall be our zeal and piety to tolerate, and with patience to bear, & in ſuch Churches there may be more cauſe to rejoyce then to grieve. Indeed the contrary practice would lead to ſeparation from all the Churches of Chriſt upon Earth, for which of them all is perfect?

Ames. enſ. Lib 4. Cap 24.

Commiſ. papers. p. 3. 12.

Bayne on *Eph* 2. 15

Hilderſ. on *Pſ.* 51. *Lect.* 35.

3. As Chriſtians ſhould fly from what

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is really Idolatry, Will-worſhip, Anti-chriſtianiſm, Popery, *&c.* So let them not be affrighted with thoſe names, when impoſed on things, without good grounds, leſt they be ſcared from neceſſary duty and Worſhip; for theſe terrifying names have been abuſively applyed to deterr weak people from the true Worſhip of God. *E. G.* Idolatry, Will-worſhip, imagery, hath been charged upon ſet forms of Prayer, and they have been cenſured to be forbidden in the ſecond Commandement. But what Chriſtian (not prepoſſeſſed beforehand with prejudice againſt them) can finde them therein condemned, or in any of the Commentaries of the Prophets or Apoſtles, or in any Expoſition of antient or modern Writers till ſome few of latter times? May not any ſimple plain hearted Chriſtian (to whoſe apprehenſions the Scriptures are ſuted, in all neceſſary duties, *Pſal* 19.7.) profeſs, he is not able to ſee any ſuch thing, but on the contrary he findeth ſet forms, not onely uſed and preſcribed in the Old Teſtament, but alſo in the New; he finds Jeſus Chriſt giving a form to his Diſciples, as *John* did to his; and how can he then reſent thoſe charges of Imagery, Idolatry, Superſtition, but as meer Scare-crows? The like may be

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ſaid of the charge of Popery, drawn up by ſome againſt the preſent forms of Prayer by Law eſtabliſhed; that they are taken out of the Maſs Book, are Popiſh Prayers, *&c.* which affrights ſome poor weak Chriſtians, they are afraid to come neat them. When as it cannot be denyed, that (1.) they were compiled by ſundry godly men of the Reformed Religion, ſome of them afterwards Martyrs in Queen *Mary's* dayes, & were ever highly valued by them. (2.) The Papiſts have ever had them in deteſtation. Queen *Mary* is reported to have razed them out of the Parliament Records, ſo as it could not (till ſome hath late Acts paſſed) be well known which was the authorized Book; and *Harding* their great Champion ſaith of it, in his diſpute with Biſhop *Jewel* on *Art.* 3. That it's ſuch a ſervice as their good Catholicks cannot joyn with us in; not only becauſe it is in the vulgar Tongue: but becauſe (ſaith he) many neceſſary things are wanting in it, and many things repugnant to the Faith and cuſtome of the Catholick Church. (3.) Popery cannot return upon us, whilſt the ſaid Common-Prayer-Book is kept unaltered, how can their proper Sacrifice, Communion in one kind, Prayers to Saints *&c.* come in, whilſt this is kept up and obſerved; and as for the taking theſe Prayers

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out of the Maſs Book, the truth is this; there are ſeveral Prayers of Antient Fathers (uſed before Popery was in the World) which the Papiſts corrupting and abuſing in their Maſs, our firſt Reformers purged out what corruptions the Papiſts had brought in, and did retain thoſe antient Prayers according to their Primitive Inſtitution. All this will be readily acknowledged by them, that judging this book unneceſſary and inconvenient, do deſire a Reformation therein; and is there any thing in all this that ſhall ſo affright good Chriſtians out of the Church? Concerning the charge of Antichriſtianiſm, it is ſo common a word in the mouths of all that liſt to rayle, that its no ſcandal to any, till the thing be fully proved; if Biſhops, and Miniſters, *&c.* be judged by any to be Anti-Chriſtian, I ſhal ſend them to that moſt excellent piece of Dr. *Moore*, his *Myſtery of Iniquity*, where they may ſee the Idea of *Anti-Chriſtianiſm* opened, and thence be informed, whom this cenſure beſt befits

IV. Take heed of pretending to greater purity and ſtrictneſs about Church Communion and Adminiſtrations, then the Word of God commends, or the examples of Chriſt and the Apoſtles and the Primitive Church do commend; nor be

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ſo extremely rigid as not to bear with things that they have tolerated. It is an obſervable rule laid down by wiſe and eminent Divines, that too much ſtrictneſſe and ſeverity often doth injury the Church more then profite it; its the way to overturn Churches not to reform them, eſpecially this ſeverity is unbecoming private Chriſtians, who having no Authority, yet complain, ſuch perſons, and ſuch things are defilements, they muſt ſeparate from them, they muſt not touch the unclean thing: ſuch ſhould take heed that they be not righteous over much, and not dare to be wiſe above what is written, leſt their too much affected purity and miſguided zeal hurt more the Church of Chriſt, and their own Souls then the corruptions they ſo much complain of. *Calvin adv. Anab.* Art. 2. *Cum ſub ſpecie ſtudii perfectionis imperfectionem nullam tollerare poſſumus; tunc Diabolum nos tumefacere ſuperbia, et hypocriſi ſeducere moneamur.*

V. Have publick Spirits, and look not ſo much on ſuch things as are moſt deſirable in your eyes, and conduce to your interteſt: as on what tends to the furtherance of the Goſpel, and the good of the Church in generall. There have been very few in our unhappie dayes, but have been ſo eagerly

gerly contending for their private opinions and wayes, that the publick interest of the Christian Religion, and of the Churches peace and welfare hath been almost forgotten by them, from whence have come in such an inundation of Errours, Heresies, Profaneness and Atheism, that the Church hath been almost ruined thereby. In vain do we contend about the greater purity and perfection of the Christian Religion, when the verie being and life of it by our contentions and divisions is indangered, what will become of our contests for greater reformation in Discipline, Worship, &c. If the Christian Religion it self be lost? They are the best and wisest Christians that have most indeavoured, that the main Fundamental Doctrines and duties of Religion may be preserved, though in the mean time they yield in small matters that concern the beautie and perfection thereof, waiting in a wise and peaceable manner til the Lord will grant them their desires therein also, in his own way and time.

VI. Take heed of running into manifest sin and evil upon fears of what is only supposed to be so. *viz.* Of casting off Ordinances, neglecting of the publick Worship of God, breach of the peace of the *Church*, *&c.* Upon pretence of supposed evils in

Communion. The commands of God for his Worſhip and Ordinances & the Church peace, are clear and cogent; the matters excepted againſt, are dark and diſputable points of controverſie, and the far greater part of the Churches of Chriſt on earth have approved of them; therefore be afraid while you would ſhun an evil ſuppoſed, you run not into another that is a real and far greater evil. A truly tender conſcience ſhould fear evil on either hand, and on this ſide rather then that.

VII. Charge not on your ſelves other mens ſins, but look to your own wayes and duties. If you judge Superiors to ſin in their impoſitions, or Biſhops in any Command, or Miniſters in their Conformity; if you find ſin in laxneſſe of Diſcipline, in looſe admiſſions to the Ordinances &c. It's not your ſin who ſtill Communicate in the Ordinances of Chriſt, provided you do your parts and Office. If were ſad living in any Church in the World, if the ſins of others ſhould be charged on ſuch as have neither calling nor power to reform them; fitter it is by far to mourn and pray for Redreſſing of ſuch evils, then to run out of the Church for them.

VIII. Take heed of that great and com-

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mon miſtake, that nothing is to be admitted in and about the government and adminiſtration of the Church of Chriſt, in the leaſt Circumſtantials thereof, but what is particularly and clearly held forth in the Scriptures. This miſtake hath occaſioned many needleſs ſcruples in the minds of weak Chriſtians, and much promoted groundleſſe ſeparation. It is a Rule laid down by a whole Aſſemblie of Divines, many of them not much affected to the preſent eſtabliſhment, [That there are ſome circumſtances concerning the Worſhip of God and Government of the Church, common to humane actions and Societies which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Chriſtian prudence according to the general Rules of the Word] And the ſame is practiſed among all thoſe that are moſt averſe to the communion of the Church of *England*, who retain amongſt themſelves many things, that they can produce little true-Scripture-proofs for, but only practiſe them prudentially as beſt conducing to the welfare of their Churches, and (as they judge) to the Order of Gods Worſhip therein, and ſome have ingeniouſly acknowledged as much. If you ſearch the Scriptures impartiallie concer-

Aſſem. Conf. of Faith. c 1.

ning Church-government you will finde therein little beſides, the main Eſſentials of it, as that the Church is to be Governed; and that by its proper Officers, and directions how they ſhould be qualified and ſet apart for their Office, what the ſeverall duties belonging to their Office are, and ſome general directions about the management thereof; All which may ſute with the ſeveral forms of Government that have been competitors amongſt us wherein the power of Chriſts Officers is further extended or more reſtrained, wherein ſome act in a ſuperior, others in a coordinate way) and therefore very many learned and godly men have judged, that no one form of government was preſcribed as neceſſary in the Church; but it's left to be ſuted to the condition of thoſe Kingdoms and Nations where the Church ſhall be planted. The like may be ſaid concerning Goſpel Worſhip; The main duties and Ordinances of it are preſcribed, and thoſe things wherein the Eſſence of them ſtands, are more fully and clearly expreſſed; but their circumſtances and manner of performance are only couched under generall Rules. This may be ſhewed abundantly by inſtances in the ſeveral parts of Worſhip as Prayer, Preaching, Sacraments,

Stillingf. Iren. pt 2. c 4. & c 8.

&c.

&c, but it is done by others fully and must be omitted here, because of the brevity of these Rules.

Nor doth this derogate from the sufficiency of the Scriptures, nor argue want of wisdome and faithfulnesse in Christ (as some plead) if he should not prescribe every Particular, as *Moses* did even to the Pinns of the Tabernacle; for the Scriptures are sufficient for that end God gave them, to make wise to Salvation, and in order thereunto to instruct us in all necessarie points of Faith and Practice: and for Church-government and Worship, there's enough in these Essentials laid down in Scripture for the preserving the welfare of the Church in the World, and securing of the true and pure Worship of God among men (those being duly observed) And wherein then are the Scriptures to be argued of insufficiencie, if they leave some particular circumstances undetermined? And for the charge of unfaithfulnesse in Jesus Christ, if he should not particularize those things, it's strangely presumptuous. Such should rather shew where Christ hath particularly determined all those circumstances, then impute unfaithfulnesse unto him, if he do not what they wold have to be done. There is not the like Reason to deter-

mine all circumstances in the Christian Churches, as was in the *Jewish* Church, the one being in its Minority, the other grown up to a state of greater libertie and perfection, *Gal.* 4, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 10. A Boy that goeth to School hath his Lesson set him, and in every particular he is stinted to his work; but when he goes to the Universitie, he only hears Lectures, hath general Rules for his study, and is left to his own disposition, for order and manner of his studies. Besides the *Jewish* Church was confined to one Nation, that had its civil government and Laws from God as wel as its Church institutions: but the Christian Church, being to spread throughout the World under different civil governments, different circumstances, might best sute with the state and condition of different People.

1 X. Take heed of Resisting the ordinances of God, whilst you profess to oppose the institutions of Men. My meaning is, whilst you withstand humane inventions (as you suppose them) in the Worship of God, beware you oppose not lawfull Authority (which is the Ordinance of God) in what they injoin in and about the Worship of God according to the power given them of the Lord. That Magistrates have the care

care of the Churches in their Dominions, committed to them, & ſhould ſee to the due adminiſtration of the Worſhip and Ordinances of God therein (as well as to the outward peace and proſperitie of the civil State) may be maniſeſt to all that are willing to ſee it, by the laudable examples of godly Kings in former times, ſuch as *David*, *Solomon*, *Aſa*, *Jehoſaphat*, *Hezekiah*, *&c.* Whoſe chiefeſt care was about Religion, and the Worſhip of God in their Dominions. Indeed they are not to make any new inſtitutions of Worſhip, nor alter any thing that is particularlie injoyned in the Word of God; But they are to ſee that all things be adminiſtred according to the ſame. And in the particular circumſtances undetermined by God, they have a power to order and ſettle things according to the generall Rules laid down in the Word; and (however you plead, you are not to be the Servants of Men) you muſt be therein ſubject to them in the Lord.

It hath been a Notion taken up by ſome, That as in former times, the Saints have ſuffered in giving Teſtimony to the prieſtly Office of Jeſus Chriſt; ſo they muſt bear witneſs to his Kingly Office, what ever they ſuffer, and not yield to any Commandments of men in and about the Wor-

Worſhip of God; But let ſuch take heed that they oppoſe not his Kingly Office, when they ſeem to ſtand up for it. For if Magiſtrates and Rulers be his Vice-gerents (as certainly they are) and there is a care of his Worſhip delegated unto them, and ſome power for ordering affairs in his Church in matters of outward conveniency and order, where he hath not expreſly determined, in withſtanding them in ſuch things, they may reſiſt Jeſus Chriſt himſelf. Indeed it may be a further Scruple in caſe Magiſtrates injoyning things inexpedient and inconvenient, and ſo ſwerve from thoſe general Rules, that they are to go by, whether they are to yeeld to them in ſuch things or no? But if the judgement of Non-Conformiſts may be taken herein, they determine in ſuch caſes it's better to obey then to withſtand, they may ſin in commanding ſuch things, and yet ſubjects not ſin in obeying them when commanded; they are Judges in ſuch particular caſes to determine what is expedient, as the Word of God determines what is neceſſary; and herein they follow the judgment of *Calvin*, *Ep.* 379. which have been ever approved by them, who ſpeaking of things of this Nature, Saith, ſome things neither right

Baxt. five Diſp. p. 460. &c.

nor

nor profitable, but ſcandalous and drawing evil Conſequences with them; yet not being repugnant to the word (in any expreſs determination of it) muſt be borne of the godly Brethren, when they cannot help it, and the Churches of Chriſt not forſaken. And indeed if this ſhould not be admitted, but ſo often as any ſhall judge ſuch or ſuch matters inexpedient, they might withſtand: the Axe ſeems to be laid at the roots of all government, and there wold be little order in the Churches of Chriſt. There is no ſociety in the World but a yielding in ſome things is neceſſary, for the peace and welfare of that Society.

X. Let not any principles or practices that you have inconſideratly taken up, ſo far ingage you, as to make you loath to return to wayes of Truth and ſoberneſs. Some have (it may be unwillingly and with reluctancy only, through the violence of ſome of their own party) been led into the wayes of rigid ſeparation, to condemn all other Churches, but their own (however found in all the main Fundamental and neceſſary Doctrines and duties of Chriſtianity) and to refuſe any Communion with them (though this hath been condemned by the moſt wiſe and knowing T. G. o their own profeſſion, ſtiled Mr. Cotton by

by ſome the bitter root of ſeparation, the way God nere bleſt with peace and holineſs, *&c.)* And now to return to wayes of ſobriety, and own ſuch as they have formerly ſo hotly contended againſt, they know not how to do it. There is naturally in man a tenaciouſneſſe of thoſe wayes and opinions they have once profeſſed, that they are loath to recede from them, eſpecially if they have contended for them, this is a great piece of denyal. Men would rather yeeld in their patrimony (ſaith *Bucer*) then in their opinion. Beſides, they may undergo the heavy charge of Apoſtacy, and deſerting the Truth, and changing their Religion, *&c.* and this deterrs many from wayes of truth and Sobriety. But it would be conſidered, it's no diſcharge for the wiſeſt, holyeſt, and moſt learned Men to retract in ſome controverſal opinions or practices; *Auguſtine* who was eſteemed the moſt learned of the Fathers, Writes ſeveral Books of Retractations; and *Jerome* to *Ruffinus*, ſaith, never bluſh Man to change thy opinion, for neither you nor I, nor any Perſon living are of ſo great Authority, as to be aſhamed to confeſs that they have Erred. And as for the charge of *Apoſtacy* and changing your Religion in ſuch

Ep. to *Jo.* a *Laſco*

ſuch a caſe as this is, it's a great miſtake to affirm this; for if you ſearch the Scriptures, Apoſtacy is a falling away from the main Fundamental confeſſed Doctrines of the Goſpel and duties of godlyneſs, into manifeſt hereſie or wickedneſſe, not the changing a mans judgment or practice in ſome points diſputable amongſt the godly and Orthodox, ſaith Mr. *Baxter* in his *Catholick Unity*. Be it known to all the Papiſts in the World, that our Religion is not changed at all, our Worſhip is the ſame, whether within Book or without: our Prayers are the ſame for matter with thoſe in the Common Prayer Book; and if I ſhold one day uſe the Common Prayer Book, and another day forbear it, I ſhould not change the Worſhip of God, to pray is part of his Worſhip but whether it be in a Book or out of it, is no part at all, but a mode or circumſtance which may be altered as occaſion ſerveth. Elſewhere the ſame learned and pious perſon ſheweth what yielding in things lawful the Scripture recommendeth to us, from the example of St. *Paul*, when he circumciſed Timothy, *Act* 16. 3. And when he took the men and purified himſelf with them in the Temple, to ſignifie the accompliſhment of the dayes of Purification, *&c. Act.* 21. 26, 27. So alſo from

Five *Diſp.* p. 488.

what

what he ſaith, 1 *Cor.* 9. 19, 20. I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means ſave ſome, and this I do for the Goſpels ſake.

XI. I add but one Rule of Caution more againſt a very common but dangerous miſtake, which is an occaſion to many of running in to Error and Hereſie, as well as into Schiſm and Separation, *viz.* Take heed of ſetting up your own apprehenſions, and conceits of the ſenſe of Scriptures about controverted points, as infallible Oracles, that you truſt ſo confidently to, that you will indanger the Churches peace and your own ſafety for the maintaining of them, where you have not all thoſe neceſſary helps and means that are requiſite to the finding out the minde of God therein. Some that have their minds fore-ſtalled with an opinon or perſwaſion, getting a Bible into their hands, preſently conceive what ever they meet withall to make for their opinion, and begin to be more confident then an hundred wiſer and more diſcerning perſons dare to be, who know their own darkneſs and ignorance, and the myſteriouſneſs of the things controverted, though they have far greater evidence of Scripture, and reaſon for them: This carries men into ſuch wilde fancies & ſtrange

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deluſions ſometimes, as bring them under the juſt cenſure of *Fanaticiſm*, (a name which is too unjuſtly applyed to others, more ſober and pious Chriſtians:) Though the Fundamental and neceſſary Doctrines, and duties of Chriſtianity, are ſo plainly laid down in Scripture, that the weakeſt Chriſtians may underſtand them; and therefore have much profit by holy and humble Meditation in the Word of God day and night: yet Points controverted are oftentimes hidden from ordinary underſtandings, that know not the Languages and proper Idioms of Scripture and cuſtoms of the Church, and other advantages of learning; that its ordinarily impoſſible, they ſhould find out the minde of God therein. It's a vain deluſion to think, that the Spirit (that ſome pretend to, more confidently then they have cauſe) ſhould diſcover all deep myſteries and obſcure points of controverſie to thoſe that have but ordinary underſtandings, and are wholly deſtitute of outward neceſſary means and hopes for the gaining knowledge thereby: the Spirit of God teaches not by ſuch immediate *Enthuſiaſmes*, but by irradiating the minde and elevating the reaſon that is exerciſed in ſearching the Truth in all Gods appointed means; and doth alſo help the weak

weak to underſtand ſavourily all thoſe plain and neceſſary Truths that tend to godlineſſe, and to conform their hearts and lives to the love and obedience of them. It were more becoming weak Chriſtians in matters diſputable to conſult with the Writings of able and learned Expoſitors that have al thoſe advantages which themſelves want, and not to preſume too much on their own underſtandings in ſuch things which would be accounted unſufferable preſumption in other Arts and Sciences, and cannot be leſs in Divinity, wherein the greateſt myſteries are contained. Other Rules of Caution might here be laid down which (to avoid prolixity) I forbear to enumerate, recommending the ſerious conſideration of theſe things to the ſober and humble Chriſtian, as greatly conducing to keep him from the by-paths of unjuſt ſeparation; and here conclude with my hearty Prayer to God, even the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that he would grant to the Profeſſors of Chriſtianity in all Nations (both Rulers and People) to minde more, and to be more zealous for the great and Fundamental points of Faith and Worſhip neceſſary to Salvation: and to contend leſs about things not in their own nature neceſſary; that high impoſitions might

not occasion violent oppositions: nor these again produce further impositions. But we may love one another unfainedly for the great things we are united in, & bear with one another more in things wherein difference is tolerable, and all may seek the unity, peace, and welfare of the Church, and the good of one another, *&c.* Then should Religion flourish the Gospel be advanced, the name of God be honoured, the Souls of men edified, and all may walk in the fear of God, and comfort of the Holy Ghost: unto which let every good Christian say, *Amen.*

FINIS.